

EXAMINING MULTICULTURALISM, AGENCY, AND IDENTITY
DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CULTURAL
DIVERSITY SCHOOL

By

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CHAPTER I:

Introduction

In 2008, 36.0% of the 60,108 refugees entering the United States (U.S.) were children seventeen years old and younger (DHS Office of Immigrant Statistics, 2009). Integrating into American culture tends to be challenging for many immigrant populations. This is especially the case for refugees who differ from immigrants because they are typically fleeing persecution in their home countries, tend to have either experienced trauma, or have witnessed violence (Walsh, Este, & Krieg, 2008). Refugees can also differ from immigrants in the amount of preparation and circumstances associated with their departure from their country of origin. While some refugees depart in anticipation of a threat to their well being, others retreat in reaction to it (McBrien, 2005). Regardless of the departure reason, refugees are usually forced to migrate whereas immigrants have more control of this decision. These differing flight circumstances have implications for whether refugees are able to make financial, linguistic, and other preparations in anticipation of resettlement in a new society (McBrien, 2005). This transition is also particularly difficult for refugees whose migration difficulties may be exacerbated by the history and role of racial discrimination in the U.S., as well as apprehension toward religious and ethnic diversity due to the War on Terror (McBrien, 2005; Oikonomidou, 2009; Singer, 2008).

For example, according to the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (2006), a comparison of refugee arrivals by global region indicates that Africans

constituted the majority of refugees entering the U.S. in 2005. In fact, this report reveals that the number of asylum seekers from Africa rose from 6,662 persons in 1998 to 13,038 persons in 1999. With the exception of 2002, no fewer than 10,717 African refugees a year were admitted to the U.S. between 1999 and 2008 (DHS Office of Immigrant Statistics, 2009; U.S Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2006). Historical settlement patterns have better prepared some cities for the influx of persons from particular groups than others (Singer, 2008; Waters & Jiménez, 2005). To illustrate, gateway cities are entry points into the U.S. for immigrant and refugee groups. Traditional gateway cities are likely to have more established services for foreign-born populations and a greater number of people from foreign backgrounds in general; this has implications for the social capital available to refugees which in turn can influence their opportunities for advancement and access to resources (Portes & Zhou, 1993). However, newer gateway cities are typically less prepared—especially where refugee *children* are concerned (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004). This has implications for the resources, social networks, and social services available to incoming as well as resettled refugee populations.

Educational services for refugee children are of particular concern. Research on the transition experiences of refugee populations has been highly medicalized (Eisenbruch, 1988; Mosselson, 2006). Transition experiences are often viewed as psychological and are sometimes measured by the extent to which foreign-born individuals suffer from consequent psychological stress (Rudmin, 2009). Increased potential for psychological stress, coupled with the trauma refugees may have experienced prior to resettlement in the U.S. have made refugees of special interest to

mental health researchers (McBrien, 2005). In an effort to assess and respond to the perceived mental health needs of refugee children, researchers and experts have positioned schools as a crucial social sector and venue for identifying, reporting, and addressing these needs (Eisenbruch, 1988; Hek, 2005; McBrien, 2005; National Child Traumatic Stress Network [NCTSN], 2005; Rousseau, Drapeau, & Corin, 1996). Given the fact that the number of refugees, particularly persons of African descent, entering the country has been on the rise, and that ethnic and cultural differences between various refugees' societies and American society tend to be numerous, it is important to cultivate an ecological perspective to record and examine refugee student academic adjustment experiences in American school systems.

As noted earlier, Sub-Saharan African refugees are likely to (and tend to) encounter multiple barriers to social integration as a result of their flight circumstances, linguistic differences, religious beliefs, and the ways in which they are racialized upon resettlement in the U.S. Several theoretical lenses can be used to explore how these and other aforementioned societal factors are likely to affect the daily and future experiences and opportunities of Sub-Saharan African refugee students. I will summarize several and their relationship to an ecological understanding of the current subject. For example, in *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins (2009) uses self-reflection, multi-sitedness, and intersectionality as methodological tools for examining the relationship between theory, lived experiences of oppression, and social change among African American women. She describes U.S. Black feminist thought as a "critical social theory" in which the emergent theory "must both be tied to Black women's lived experiences and aim to better those experiences in some fashion" (Collins, 2009, p. 35). Although not specifically defined as

such, ecological theoretical perspectives can similarly be used to explore the connections between individuals, various societal structures, and activism. The preference for a more “traditional” ecological perspective over Collins’ (2009) Black feminist thought when investigating the experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugee children resettled in the U.S. is that research can begin with an examination of manifestations of structural forces within spaces, such as schools, rather than at an individual level.

As previously mentioned, upon resettlement Sub-Saharan African refugees are likely to enter the U.S. with cultural beliefs, practices, and perspectives that could differ and conflict with those present in America. Mohanty’s (1991) “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” speaks out against the colonization of third world women by Western feminists through the construction of the “third world difference” (p. 53). In an effort to avoid participating in the production of ethnocentric assumptions about foreigner populations’ experiences of and perspectives on oppression in the U.S., she asserts that it is important to employ a theoretical approach that is both intentional and careful in its definition of marginalization and oppression. In her 2003 reflection on “Under Western Eyes”, Mohanty advocates for approaches to exploring the effects of Western feminism on “other” (i.e., third world) women that are marked by at least two important features. First, she calls for “[focus] on quality of life as the criteria for distinguishing between social majorities and minorities” in an effort to “[draw] attention to the continuities as well as discontinuities between the haves and have-nots within the boundaries of nations and between nations and indigenous communities” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 227). Second, Mohanty (2003) proposes a comparative feminist studies model which structures analyses around issues, social forces, and histories that

differentially impact communities rather than the study of any particular group's marginalization in isolation. Thus complexities, intersections, connections, and dissimilarities within and between groups—which are relative depending on one's race, gender, class, and citizenship status—can be appropriately explored in context and in relation to those of fellow groups. A broad ecological perspective can similarly be utilized to examine the implications of social forces for foreign-born populations and other groups within the U.S. while using disparities in current and potential quality of life as an indication of difference. In sum, an broad-based ecological perspective that attends to the goals and concerns addressed in Collins' (2009) and Mohanty's (2003) frameworks can be employed to effectively and respectfully examine the experiences and of Sub-Saharan African refugee students resettled in America. Thus an ecological theoretical framework can be informative for exploring whether and how educational spaces respond to the needs of Sub-Saharan African refugee children (and to what ends) with implications for their academic adjustment and future quality of life. Although not sacrosanct, my chosen theoretical ecological model provides a robust lens with which to examine certain dimensions of the educational experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugee children.

Educational achievement has been directly related to upward mobility in the U.S. and the importance of education is arguably incorporated into American values. Past and recent legislation, such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB 2001), are described as attempts to improve academic outcomes for low-achieving students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Numerous factors are expected to contribute to the ways and extent to which refugee children adjust to academic settings in the U.S. with

subsequent implications for successful navigation of American society. Different environments have been found to influence different acculturative outcomes, behaviors, and forms of adjustment to a new context (Berry, 2009; Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005). Given the numerous and various pre- and post-immigration circumstances that can affect the transition barriers that many refugee children face, it is important to explore how an academic environment can influence the acculturative experiences and consequent academic adjustment of refugees. In this context, acculturation refers to the broad array of socialization and identity development processes that accompany sustained cultural exchange. For example, more obvious changes could include an increase in the use of English to communicate at home or with others if an individual's native language is not English, while more subtle changes could include a shift in an individual's perceptions of beauty that are more aligned with those of the dominant group in their resettlement community. These and other types of indicators are important when exploring identity development processes that affect and are affected by acculturation. Furthermore, an understanding of acculturation is particularly important when examining the process' influence on academic adjustment and successful societal integration.

Unfortunately, there is limited research involving ecological approaches to studying acculturation and adjustment among refugees, especially among groups from Sub-Saharan African countries. Because refugees from this area represent a particularly vulnerable and disenfranchised group that is susceptible to discrimination and characterized by varied pre-resettlement educational experiences, their needs are likely to differ from those of refugees from other parts of the world. The acculturation processes and academic adjustment of refugee children must be studied holistically, or ecologically,

to gain a more complete understanding of how educational environments are likely to impact their resettlement experiences in the U.S.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) describes the ecology of human development as a study of the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between human beings and their environments over the course of their lives. He maintains that the ecological environment is comprised of relationships, settings, roles, institutions, and values nested within one another that influence human behavior within a given context. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological approach to human development can be used to explore acculturation, a developmental process, and its implications for academic adjustment, behaviors, interactions, and outcomes within formal educational settings. This theoretical lens will be employed in the current study. The purpose of this research is to explore aspects of the physical, social, programmatic, and pedagogic environment of an academic environment, specifically a charter school that serves immigrant, refugee, and native-born students. The primary research questions explore the school's culture, curriculum, mission statement, and programmatic structure, to assess its intentional and unintentional affects on student's acculturative experiences and identity development processes within and beyond the classroom. This approach arises in response to an abundance of academic research on the acculturation experience that incorporates individual perspectives and outcomes, but fails to go beyond them to examine and understand ways in which receiving community groups interpret and accommodate the needs of refugee populations. It also responds to scholars' calls for research that incorporates ecological theory, historical perspectives, and the effects of power inequities such as discrimination into its approaches (Tseng & Yoshikawa, 2008).

Theories of Human Ecology and Acculturation

Bronfenbrenner (1977) maintains that microsystems are characterized by how individuals interact with their immediate settings. Settings are defined by “particular physical features in which the participants engage in particular activities in particular roles (i.e., daughter, parent, teacher, employee, etc.) for particular periods of time” (p. 514). The microsystem of interest in this analysis focuses on refugee students and their academic adaptation within an American charter school. Mesosystems are comprised of multiple microsystems that have major and direct impact on individuals who operate within them. For example, a Somali refugee child’s mesosystem could include the interrelationship between microsystems that operate at school, home, and among friends. The events that take place in one microsystem are likely to have implications for what occurs within and between others. Exosystems are described as extensions of mesosystems that, at the least, have an indirect impact on the mesosystems within which individuals operate. Bronfenbrenner (1977) cites societal institutions, the mass media, neighborhood, government, and how resources and services are allocated within a society among the many components of an exosystem. Poverty and residence in an impoverished neighborhood, for example, could be viewed as influential components of a Somali refugee child’s exosystem with implications for his or her family life, relationships with peers, and experiences in the classroom.

Exosystems (as do meso- and microsystems) operate within macrosystems, which contain what Bronfenbrenner (1977) calls prototypical “blueprints” for settings, roles, and interactions that occur on the micro-, meso-, and exosystem levels. Macrosystems implicitly and explicitly convey ideologies and values within a society that are

perpetuated through laws, norms, customs, and practices. For example, capitalism and the value placed on educational achievement are macrosystemic components of American culture. Public education is legally required for children in the U.S. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Although education is universally available, its quality varies greatly across states, as well as between diverse educational environments. Cultural beliefs in and reliance on capitalism and privatization perpetuate differential access to education and this has implications for what takes place at microsystemic levels as well as individual opportunities. Finally, Bronfenbrenner (1986) emphasizes the importance of taking the chronosystem into account to examine the relationship between developmental changes that take place in an individual within one or across multiple environments. He distinguishes between normative developmental life transitions, such as puberty and marriage, and nonnormative life transitions, such as traumatic or life-changing events. For him, the chronosystem can also extend beyond an individual to include “personal and historical life events” with implications for an individual’s personal development (p. 724). In order to explore the educational experiences of refugee students in an academic context, the macro-, exo-, meso-, and chronosystems that encompass and influence this microsystem must be taken into account.

Scholars have studied and questioned the means by which foreign-born populations experience and transition into life in their resettlement communities. Although the terms *assimilation* and *acculturation* are sometimes used interchangeably, there are distinctions between these processes. Assimilation is typically discussed in terms of the degree to which immigrants abandon “essential” aspects of their culture and heritage in an effort to seek greater acceptance by majority members and thus navigate

society upon resettlement (McBrien, 2005). For example, Waters & Jiménez (2005) operationalize assimilation by assessing the extent to which native-born Americans and immigrants (including refugees) differ and compare on measures of socioeconomic status, residential concentration, proficiency in the English language, and rates of intermarriage. This conceptualization positions assimilation as a gradient where progress, or successful assimilation, is associated with similarity to mainstream American culture and social inclusion. One problem with this approach is that it assumes that refugee groups from various cultures are equally capable of assimilating into US society (or desire to do so) via the above types of measures. Equally problematic is the fact that this approach fails to acknowledge the role of the resettlement community in this process, suggesting that immigrants are almost fully responsible for the degree to which they are accepted by society when, in fact, they are not. As noted earlier, acculturation, broadly defined, is a process by which individuals or cultural groups experience behavioral or attitude changes as a result of immersion in a different culture (McBrien, 2005). This process does not include abandonment of one's cultural heritage. More comprehensive acculturation models and measures attempt to independently measure how aspects of one's cultural context are retained and ways in which aspects of other cultures are acquired as individuals become a part of new environments. They also consider how the actions and attitudes of the receiving community influence an individual or group's acculturation patterns.

An overview of one of the most influential theories illuminates the pivotal role that environments can have on acculturative experiences. Berry's (2009) acculturative taxonomy illustrates four acculturation strategies—means by which immigrants can

transition into a resettlement society: integration; assimilation; separation; and, marginalization. This model also provides four general descriptions of resettlement community social climates that influence these transition methods: multicultural; “melting pot”; segregational; and, exclusionary. Berry’s (2009) model considers both acculturation attitudes and behaviors when conceptualizing how foreign-born populations transition into dominant culture as well as how members of the receiving community accept them.

According to this theory, multicultural resettlement communities, characterized by the acceptance of ethnic and cultural diversity, facilitate interactions between immigrants and members of the dominant group. As a result, refugee groups that choose to frequently interact with resettlement community members while retaining aspects of their own cultures resettle via *integration*. A “melting pot” social climate encourages the marginalization of an immigrant groups’ heritage culture as well as identity, and supports intermingling between dominant and foreign-born or non-dominant cultural and ethnic groups. Berry (2009) posits that in this context, immigrants that yield to social pressures *assimilate* in the general sense of the word, downplaying or discarding aspects of their culture in exchange for social inclusion. Societies where immigrants are encouraged to retain aspects of their culture because the dominant culture(s) do not exhibit a strong interest in regular interactions with them encourage immigrant groups to segregate. Consequently, foreign-born populations that choose to maintain aspects of their culture either in response to or in spite of resettlement community welcoming attitudes tend to have resettlement experiences characterized by *separation*. Finally, exclusive social climates discourage both immigrant groups’ maintenance of their cultural practices and

heritages and relationship-building with foreign-born groups through regular interaction. Refugee groups that similarly discard aspects of their culture and demonstrate little to no interest in regular interactions with resettlement community members' transition into their new lives via *marginalization*. Berry's (2009) conceptualization contextualizes immigrants and refugees' acculturation strategies in the attitudes and behaviors exhibited by members of the dominant culture. According to this theory, foreign-born populations may acculturate differently based on cultural and ethnic features, as well as personal traits that influence positive or negative reactions from members of the receiving community.

Next, Rudmin (2009) conceptualizes acculturation as a cultural learning process that results in the acquisition of a second culture. This "secondary culture acquisition" definition of acculturation—partially formulated in response to Berry's (2009) acculturation taxonomy—emphasizes the notion that mainstream cultures can undergo acculturative change as well. This is important because it presents refugees as individuals and groups with valuable cultural beliefs and practices that can be contributed to their new environments despite the circumstances under which they enter them. Rudmin (2009) also draws attention to the fact that environments can undergo changes in response to the individuals that comprise the community. Both perspectives contribute to the nomenclature and understanding of this complex process. Secondary culture acquisition can also be explored in terms of how individuals adapt to a new context, measured by social interactions, behaviors, language use, and the ease with which an individual can navigate their surroundings (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005). Both frameworks consider acculturation in general. However, it is unclear whether and how

these processes bear out for refugee children as they acculturate in general and attempt to adjust to academic settings in particular.

Academic adjustment typically refers to how students adapt to their academic environments as measured by grades, interactions with classmates and teachers, and academic attendance. For the purposes of this study, academic adjustment refers to the information and experiences that refugee students receive from their educational environments that enable them to successfully navigate their resettlement society. This conceptualization draws from Anyon's (1980) work, "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work," in which she explores how social class divisions are reproduced by social and pedagogic features in varying academic environments. The author explores and identifies characteristics of elementary schools that are likely to influence workforce opportunities of individuals educated in the U.S. Thus academic adjustment in this study will refer to the tangible and intangible information, rituals, mentoring, and exchanges that refugee students receive from one specific educational environment that are likely to influence their social and future workforce experiences and opportunities in American society. Although this process will not assess every dimension of the academic adjustment process, this approach provides a broad lens by which one can examine some of the transitional experiences of refugee students. Specifically, the current study will examine whether and how Berry's acculturation taxonomy theory and its derivative manifest in a specific educational site that focuses on a diverse student population that includes Sub-Saharan African refugee students.

Literature Review

In addition to summarizing existing studies, the following four sections illustrate how each level of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological environment can play an important role in understanding the educational experiences of refugee students.

Pre-Immigration Circumstances and Implications for Refugee Youth Education

In order to understand how refugee children transition into US culture, many scholars agree that it is important to acknowledge chronosystemic factors, primarily flight circumstances and traumatic events, such as separation from and the loss of family members that seem to be characteristic of many refugee experiences (Davies, 2008; Kovacev & Shute, 2004; Naidoo, 2009; Roxas, 2008). Kunz (1973, as cited in McBrien, 2005) categorizes refugees according to the amount of preparation associated with their flight from their country of origin. Departure in reaction to foreseen conflict or danger is termed anticipatory refugee movement, whereas acute refugee movements refer to departure in the midst of danger and persecution. These differing flight circumstances have implications for whether refugees are able to make financial, linguistic, and other preparations in anticipation for their transition into life in their resettlement communities.

Varying levels of education and occupational skills as well as demographic features such as ethnicity and the cultural distance between the culture of origin and the culture(s) in the resettlement community can determine the ease or difficulty with which refugees are able to establish a new life (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004; Cabassa, 2003; McBrien, 2005). For example, social service organizations and researchers have called attention to the educational needs of refugee students coming from oral traditions where methods of instruction, teaching styles, and the student-teacher dynamic may have

drastically differed (Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services [BRYCS], 2009; Naidoo, 2009; Oikonomidou, 2009). There is much concern for children who may be completely unfamiliar with using written language on a regular basis or with the norms associated with American schools (BRYCS, 2009; Lee, 2001; NCTSN, 2005). Reports on refugee children's refugee camp experiences cite interrupted schooling and varied educational resources across camps as sources of differential academic performance when settled in a receiving community (Dooley, 2009; NCTSN, 2005).

Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004) observes that the extent to which refugee children are financially secure in their country of origin influences their perceptions of educational opportunities in their resettlement community. Prior research on the relationship between refugees' past experiences and resettlement adjustment behaviors potentially supports this association. For example, among Asian Pacific Islander refugee groups with fluent and limited proficiency in the English language, researchers observe that students' ability to learn English as a second language is mediated by factors such as parental socioeconomic status in their country of origin and the quality of education while in refugee camps (Ima & Rumbaut, 1989). A study on the relationship between acculturation, goals, and academic outcomes among Cambodian and Vietnamese refugee students finds correlations between commitments to goals, perceptions of efficacy as they relate to accomplishing goals, and academic outcomes (Lese & Robbins, 1994). Fieldwork results show truancy and lowered expectations of self as products of tensions between previous academic experiences that leave many such students feeling unprepared for the academic expectations placed on them by members of their receiving community (Dooley, 2009; Lee, 2001). Collectively, these findings suggest that perceptions of

opportunities, as a result of previous experiences, could influence refugee students' achievement goals. These are just some of the many pre-immigration circumstances that can affect academic outcomes for refugee children transitioning into U. S. education systems.

Cultural Values and Social Structure Pre- and Post-Resettlement

Systemic ideologies, values, and social institutions are part of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) macrosystem and can influence how refugees interact with their academic environments. One major macrosystemic feature is the impact of culture of origin values, practices, and ways of being on how refugee students orient themselves within a resettlement society. Ethnographic studies find that migration experiences as a refugee particularly contribute to changing perceptions of belonging. For example, Oikonomidou's (2009) fieldwork reveals how Somali female refugee high school students navigate religious expression and gender role expectations as they transition from life as Somalis within Somalia to Somalis in the U.S. Among such girls, this transition also has implications for changes in solidarity across ethnic groups from Somalia. Though clan affiliations are of significance for a sense of belonging for the Somali girls in Oikonomidou's (2009), participants also emphasize the greater importance they place on being compatriots.

Social relations either within the culture of origin or the resettlement community are also influential. For example, in his fieldwork with Somali Bantu male refugees, Roxas (2008) describes how the social structure within Somalia positioned Somali Bantus as an inferior ethnic group. This subordinate status had an impact on how they were treated in Somali and undermined their socioeconomic status. Moreover, their low

status followed Somali Bantus into resettlement camps and had implications for their transitional experiences. Similarly, a study involving Roma refugees resettled in Ontario, Canada, recognizes the importance of this macrosystemic perspective for this ethnic group that was also marginalized in their countries of origin (Walsh, Este, & Krieg, 2008). Although historical discrimination can be viewed as part of an individual or group's chronosystem, implications of race and race relations can arguably manifest structurally and consequently follow refugee groups into resettlement. Discrimination in the U.S. is repeatedly cited as an adjustment factor, particularly within school environments, in work with refugees from Sub-Saharan African countries (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004; Oikonomidoy, 2009) as well as with foreign-born populations from other regions (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005; Hughes, Hollander, & Martinez, 2009).

Furthermore, a disconnect between legal support for refugees and resource provision for foreign-born populations represents another influential structural component. Though many governments legally support efforts to facilitate the adjustment of refugee and foreign-born populations, government laws may undermine these intentions (Hek, 2005) or provide few or inadequate resources to accomplish these goals (Davies, 2008; Oikonomidoy, 2009; Roxas, 2008). Scholars agree that these shortcomings tend to be in the areas of teacher education and preparation for refugee and immigrant students (Davies, 2008; Hughes et al., 2009), English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction (Naidoo, 2009), and curriculum and teaching methods (Davies, 2008; Hek, 2005).

Community Resources and Connections

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) exosystem and mesosystem levels pertain to broad or specific communities and connections between multiple spheres of an individual's life. Scholars stress the impact of the resettlement community context on the general adjustment of refugees (Berry, 2009). At the national level, the political relationship between the country of origin and the receiving country affects refugees and immigrants' abilities to transition into mainstream society (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Portes & Zhou, 1993). For instance, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks have negatively influenced attitudes toward Middle Eastern and Muslim foreigners in the U.S. at both policy and community levels (McBrien, 2005; Singer, 2008; US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2006).

Resources within the community are also important (Portes & Zhou, 1993) and certain government programs and social service organizations attempt to facilitate the transition process for refugees and other immigrant populations (Smith, 2008; Walsh et al., 2008). The presence of businesses owned and operated by refugee populations (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Smith, 2008), as well as of religious, educational and recreational institutions for refugees (Birman et al., 2005) can also constitute available community assets. Moreover, resources controlled by refugees in a receiving community reflect potential social capital. The development of social capital through social networks is one of the most influential factors that facilitate the positive adjustment of refugees. Researchers also stress the importance of strong, positive relationships between refugee children and their family members (Hek, 2005; Roxas, 2008; Trickett & Birman, 2005); members of their ethnic group within the resettlement community as well as those outside

of their ethnic group (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004); peers at school (Kovacev & Shute, 2004); and, teachers at school (Hek, 2005; Smith, 2008). School-parent partnerships and parental involvement are also significant (Davies, 2008; Hughes et al., 2009; Kovacev & Shute, 2004; Walsh et al., 2008). Building relationships between schools and the refugee students' resettlement communities can support multiple aspects of students' educational experiences. Multiple studies assert that this is especially important for literacy education or the navigation of academic and non-academic learning materials (Dooley, 2009; Sarroub, 2008). Such proactive relationships, in addition to supplementary support and extracurricular opportunities, can improve crucial social capital (Naidoo, 2009; Oikonomidoy, 2009).

Yet for some refugees, the connections between the family, school, community, and even work sphere can foster stress. For example, in a study on the acculturation patterns and adjustment behaviors of former Soviet Union refugee students, findings show that American identification and consequent behaviors are more advantageous in academic contexts, but can provoke conflict at home (Birman et al., 2005; Trickett & Birman, 2005). Roxas' (2008) study involving male Somali Bantu refugees illustrates how older siblings take on multiple roles as primary wage earners, caregivers, and tutors or cultural brokers for their families. Also, although community resources have been shown to improve the academic adaptation of refugees, limited resources and negative pre-existing social and ethnic relations have been cited as factors contributing to a hostile resettlement environment (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004; Oikonomidoy, 2009; Roxas, 2008). In contrast, identification and empathy with the refugee experience have been associated with favorable attitudes towards refugees (Smith, 2008).

Consistent with Rudmin's (2009) secondary culture acquisition approach to acculturation, research on community accommodations in response to refugee arrivals reveals the relationship between community level factors, community partnerships, and individual opportunities. For example, Smith (2008) finds that ESL teachers often act as social workers, going beyond their teaching duties to help students navigate various aspects of daily school life. As a result, procedural changes were made such as the creation of three levels of need that determined ESL placement of beyond those prescribed and required by the state's Educational Department. Furthermore, the school collaborated with the community's refugee resource center to provide ESL courses for individuals who needed instruction but who were not the appropriate age for school enrollment. Smith (2008) notes that these approaches allowed for more appropriate instructional approaches to better and diversely meet refugee students' language learning needs. Thus far I have illustrated how macrosystemic social patterns, such as resettlement society values, fears, and consequent discrimination practices, can influence the relationships that refugees are able to build in their resettlement communities. These studies also show how chronosystemic factors, such as pre-flight circumstances, can influence resettlement experiences. The following section focuses on Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological levels in which educational experiences can be explored.

Individual Ethnic Identity and The Scholastic Microsystem

Health concerns and psychopathologic symptoms, such as loneliness, hopelessness, depression, low self-esteem, are attributed to traumatic flight and pre-immigration experiences and have implications for academic performance (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004; Davies, 2008; Kovacev & Shute, 2004; Roxas, 2008). Self-esteem,

influenced by an individual's perception about his or her ethnic identity, is of particular interest in this study. Low self-esteem, as a result of pre-immigration or resettlement ethnic discrimination, can influence academic outcomes. Studies involving native-born African American, White, Hispanic, and Native American children find that positive perceptions of one's ethnic identity and self-esteem are correlated with positive perceptions of self-efficacy (Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999). Furthermore, for Cambodian and Vietnamese adolescent refugees, academic achievement goals, commitment to these goals, engagement and academic outcomes (as measured by grades and study habits) are influenced by perceptions of self-efficacy and whether or not the goals seem attainable (Lese & Robbins, 1994). Moreover, research involving Southeast Asian refugee youth also finds that students from households where parents valued cultural retention academically outperformed their peers from households with parents who culturally assimilated (Wehrly, 1990). Such findings suggest a salutary relationship between positive perceptions of ethnic identity or positive perceptions of efficacy and strong academic outcomes.

In contrast, other comparisons of refugee to native-born American students provide less consistent relationships. For example, former Soviet Union refugee students who function with an American, rather than Russian, identity acculturation orientation tend to have better grades, fewer absences, and a stronger sense of belonging than students who retain Russian identity orientations (Birman et al., 2005; Trickett & Birman, 2005). However, Lese and Robbins (1994) do not suggest a relationship between ethnic identity and academic outcomes when using the *Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale* (SL-Asia) acculturation measure. Though these conflicting findings

reflect the uncertainty associated with this relationship, a connection is apparent between ethnic identification and academic adjustment. Ethnic identity development, particularly that of Sub-Saharan African refugee students, and its association with academic adjustment is consequently of interest in this study.

In addition to the influence of ethnic identity, positive relationships with classmates (Hek, 2005; Trickett & Birman, 2005) and low levels of discrimination (Davies, 2008; Hughes et al., 2009) contribute to successful academic adjustment among immigrants and refugees. According to Davies (2008), academic environments that foster mutual respect, trust, and caring can mitigate the psychologically traumatic effects typical of refugee experiences. Immigrant children can also benefit from language-support teachers (Hek, 2005); culturally appropriate teaching materials and techniques (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004); appropriate grade placement and promotion (Roxas, 2008; Wilkinson, 2002); and, curricula that reflect refugees' global perspectives (Davies, 2008). Mosselson (2007) recommends that educators incorporate the experiences of refugees into their curriculum to help other students understand and relate to them, as well as broaden the worldviews of native-born students. It is also critical that refugee students have a safe space to share their experience with each other (Oikonomidoy, 2009). In sum, microsystems such as schools and classrooms have been broadly explored in terms of their affects on the identity development and academic adjustment of refugee students. I am interested in examining some of these dynamics in a specific U.S. context for refugee students.

Research Challenges and Opportunities

Studies Involving Refugee Populations

Existing literature reveals a desperate need for more studies on the experiences of refugees. Though the academic experiences of certain refugee students, such as those from Africa, are arguably more difficult to document if refugees coming from such regions are affected by psychological and physical health conditions, research on health issues should not necessarily constitute an overwhelming majority of studies about this population. While broad overviews of refugee experiences allow for examinations of larger processes and shared obstacles, insight into the strengths and cultural capital of such populations may require investigation restricted to a single country or portion of the country. For example, Roxas' (2008) qualitative research on young Somali Bantu men illuminates aspects of their refugee experience that Burundian refugees may not share. There is much work to be done in this field to explore the experiences of refugees in general, and to compare them to those of refugees from specific regions. The current study seeks to respond to this paucity in research.

Units of Analysis and Observation

Many ethnographic and empirical studies on refugee experiences use the individual or the group as a unit of analysis and observation (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005; Davies, 2008; Kovacev & Shute, 2004; Lese & Robbins, 1994; Oikonomidoy, 2009; Roxas, 2008; Trickett & Birman, 2005). Few position the resettlement community as a unit of analysis, observing the community on the individual, community, and social artifact levels (Smith, 2008). Although it may often be appropriate to utilize the individual as a unit of analysis, research that fails to include other

perspectives is threatened by reductionism and may result in an incomplete understanding of behaviors and attitudes (Babbie, 2005). Use of diverse units of analysis and observation techniques when conducting fieldwork and empirical research can strengthen the quality of findings. To this end, this study focuses on the institution (i.e., school) as the unit of analysis and examines its potential influence on refugee student adjustment.

Challenges When Studying Acculturation

An exploration of the relationship between acculturation and adjustment requires operationalization of these phenomena. Scholars have generally agreed on the use of language competence, academic performance assessments (i.e., grades), social integration, regular school attendance, and positive engagement at school to measure the adjustment of refugees and immigrants within an educational environment. However, there are other measures of the acculturation process. Decisions are complicated because differences in theories about the acculturation process shape the scales used to measure it (Cabassa, 2003). Three studies illustrate some of the problems associated with this discord.

First, in their empirical study of the sociodemographic and psychosocial factors that may influence adult immigrants' acculturation patterns, Mokoukolo and Taillandier-Schmitt (2008) describe acculturation in terms of an assessment of how immigrants orient themselves toward their society of origin and their resettlement community. They examine whether the acculturation methods used by Stephenson (2000) could be predictive among Algerian and Moroccan immigrants in France. However, Stephenson's (2000) theoretical framework only allows for a one-dimensional view of acculturation. Overall, Stephenson's (2000) four orientations are used to determine

whether individuals more likely to closely associate with their new or former cultures—and he positions these two options on opposite ends of a spectrum. According to Cabassa (2003), “instruments based on this model fail to capture how individuals balance both of these cultural domains as they go through the process of acculturation” (p. 133), and do not investigate how new and preexisting cultures merge, clash, and coexist within an individual. The underlying and speculative assumption is that culture is replaced and lost, rather than altered, as individuals move from one cultural context to another.

Stephen, Eisenbruch, Lockwood and Tes (1985) conducted an evaluative study on the effectiveness of the South Cove Community Health Center’s summer school program that was managed by Metropolitan Indochinese Children and Adolescent Services (M.I.C.A.S.). The researchers were particularly interested in studying how the Khmer refugee students adapted and adjusted and the impacts of these processes on academic performance. In this context, adaptation was defined as the behavioral changes that refugee children undergo to navigate their host environment, and adjustment as the emotional changes that refugee children undergo to reconcile their past and ongoing experiences. Adaptation and adjustment are measured using modified versions of the Children’s Acculturation Problem Index and the Children’s Alienation Scale, respectively. Questions on the adaptation scale include investigation into the children’s experiences with “finding help from American people for things like welfare and food stamps” and “knowing how to get things done in Boston (i.e., finding a house, shopping, going to the bank)” (South Cove Community Health Center, 1985, pp. 80-81). A comparison of the questions presented to the students and the researchers’ operationalizations of adjustment and adaptation call the reliability of the measures into

question (Babbie, 2005). Moreover, because the Acculturation Problem Index was initially created to measure acculturation issues that adults tend to face, many of the items on the scale are developmentally inappropriate for children between the ages of 10 and 15 years old. This constraint constitutes threats to the content, criterion, and construct validity of the scale (Wallston, 2005). Although the researchers ultimately concluded that the intervention benefited the students in various academic and acculturative ways, these conclusions are questionable.

Lastly, the Turner and Brown (2008) study of the Friendship Project also involves adapting existing models to make them age-appropriate. There were four dependent variables examined during this intervention: Empathy (i.e., high or low) towards refugees; Preferred Acculturative Strategy (i.e., the strategies that children preferred refugees employ to integrate into their societies); Perceived Acculturative Fit (i.e., how children thought refugees desired to acculturate); and, positive or negative attitudes towards refugees. Positive or negative attitudes towards French and English people were also examined as a control variable. *Preferred Acculturation Strategies* is based on Berry's (1984) theorized four acculturation strategies that refugees utilized to adjust to life in a new culture. The researchers attempted to utilize an age-appropriate measure designed by Dias Alexandre et al. (2003). However, they adapted Berry's (1983) acculturation model in ways that are advised against in the literature. The authors converted acculturation into a uni-dimensional measure. Yet, one of the strength's of Berry's model is the bidimensional view of the acculturation process. Thus their study severely limited how acculturation dynamics could be identified and examined.

As these three research examples illustrate, disagreement about the acculturation process and its implications for the measures used to assess it can undermine research credibility. The above illustrations also inform the many issues associated with using, borrowing, and adapting existing acculturation measures. I contend that it may be prudent to use Berry's (2009) acculturation environment taxonomy to aid in the exploration and classification of a school's social and educational environment. This also provides an opportunity to examine the cultural exchange and cultural acquisition Rudmin (2009) mentions in his conceptualization of secondary culture acquisition. This approach may also illumine how Berry's (2009) acculturation taxonomy and Rudmin's (2009) culture acquisition process play a role in the adaptive educational experiences of refugees. Furthermore, this use of Berry's (2009) model may be particularly useful for exploring how Bronfenbrenner's (1977) microsystemic environment influences individual opportunities and outcomes.

The Cultural Diversity School: Context, Query, and Research Process

Site Description

This research endeavor is an ethnographic study of the educational and social practices observed in the Cultural Diversity School¹ (CDS), a charter school for refugee and native-born children outside of the metropolitan city in a southeastern area of the U.S. CDS is located in Schooltown, a predominantly White, middle-class community (See Table 1 in the Appendix). Although some of the native-born and immigrant students who attend CDS reside in this neighborhood, many of the refugee, immigrant, and local native-born students who attend CDS live in Haventown, an ethnically diverse, working-

¹ Pseudonym used to protect the school's identity.

class community and unexpected gateway city. 2010 U.S. Census data indicates that nearly 40% of the town's inhabitants were born outside of the U.S. (See Table 2 in the Appendix). In less than 30 years, it has become home to refugees from over 50 countries (Lohr, 2007). CDS has a large refugee and immigrant population that comprises about half of its 400-person student body. The school serves seven grade levels, kindergarten to 6th grade, on two campuses. CDS began with what is now its Main Campus, which serves students in kindergarten through 4th grade, and expanded to include a second campus that houses 5th and 6th grade students. More than 35 countries and 15 distinct languages are represented in their dual-campus community. Curriculum consists of content from both the International Baccalaureate (IB) and state-mandated curricula. Personal and professional relationships with faculty at the school have granted me access to this educational site.

This study will examine the extent to which this school is able to create an environment that encourages successful academic adjustment for refugee children. The overall research goal is to analyze how CDS's culture attempts to prepare 4th grade refugee students for success in American society. I am interested in assessing if and how faculty, staff, curricula, teaching methods, and programs are likely contribute to the academic adjustment of refugee children—particularly because as members of a generally impoverished group they are statistically expected to under-perform their native-born peers (Nelson, Rosenberg, & Van Meter, 2004). For the purposes of this study, academic adjustment refers to the information that refugee students receive from their educational environments that enables them to successfully navigate their resettlement society. I am interested in the effect that programs, activities, and curricula

are expected to have on refugee students' acculturative experiences, ethnic identity development, and skill development needed to successfully navigate American society.

Charter schools are currently at the center of a heated debate. Although advocates praise them for their ability to serve underprivileged populations, critics accuse charter schools of "cream skimming" academically successful students from public schools (Lacireno-Paquet, Holyoke, Moser, & Henig, 2002). Another perspective argues that, although charter schools that "cream skim" tend to produce children with better academic outcomes, those that serve underprivileged populations tend to be less effective than public schools that assist the same population (Lacireno-Paquet, et al., 2002). Although some findings suggest that charter schools tend to underperform their public counterparts (Nelson et al., 2004), others maintain that performance comparisons vary from state to state and depend on the population served (Betts & Hill, 2006). My research will ecologically examine CDS' approach to serving a largely socioeconomically underprivileged population. Findings will inform the ongoing debate on the efficacy of charter schools to include measures of adjustment beyond grade point averages, state-mandated examinations, and attendance.

This case study represents the first phase of a larger project at this site. My analysis focuses on the school's social climate, curriculum, pedagogy, programs, administrators and teachers, as well as the actual CDS facility. A mixed methodology is used that includes interviews, document review, census data analysis, and participant observation. Although attendance records and report cards are not examined, broad measures of social and cultural adjustment will be assessed via participant observation, interviews, and review of curriculum materials. The research questions explore the

culture, curriculum, mission statement, and programmatic structure as they relate to the acculturative and identity development processes that are likely to affect refugees.

Research Questions and Expectations

Two questions guide this exploratory study: (1) What elements, if any, of the CDS environment are characteristic of one or more aspects of Berry's (2009) acculturation taxonomy environments (i.e., multicultural; "melting pot"; segregational; or exclusionary)? (2) Based on the data collected from participant observation field notes, faculty interviews, and curricula review, how does CDS attempt to influence students' perceptions about themselves and others? Although findings are not all-encompassing, they help illumine some of the effects CDS' culture has on the academic adjustment and acculturative experiences of refugee children. I anticipated that the school curricula, activities, and social environment at CDS emphasize a multicultural acculturative environment more so than melting pot, segregational or exclusionary ones. Furthermore, I expected that CDS will foster positive attitudes about many countries, ethnic groups, and cultures. Teachers and/or faculty were expected to foster students' appreciations for their own and others' ethnic identities.

Methods of Procedure

Sampling, Subject Selection, and Data Collection

In May 2010, I engaged in participant observation at CDS to assess dynamics such as iconography, school displays, activities, student-teacher classroom interaction, language usage, and other measures used during the educational process that may provide insight into the possible acculturative orientation of the school. Between August and October 2011, I also interviewed a cross-section of five personnel from the school

including program coordinators and fourth grade teachers. Data for this purposive sample was collected from all participants who completed and returned consent forms (IRB#:101594). The in-depth interviews, approximately one hour in length, were audio-taped. In addition to learning about their views about and experiences with Sub-Saharan African refugee students, of particular interest was: 1) processes, methods, and strategies that inform students about their culture as well as other ethnicities and cultures; 2) overall CDS missions and goals; and, 3) whether and how school personnel approach academic performance, truancy, and students who are struggling academically. Interviews with teachers and administrators provided insight into some of the values and perspectives that influence the culture and environment at CDS. The interviews also provided insight into the intentionality behind the construction of this microsystem that influences the roles into which refugee children in particular are socialized (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

I concentrated on 4th graders rather than other grade levels at CDS. Because the 4th graders are the senior class at the main location, most have matriculated for years at CDS. Thus their experiences were expected to provide the most insight into the socialization processes at the school. I did not interview students. The scope of this study reflects an examination of the CDS environment, rather than student perspectives. However, participant observation enabled me to interact in the setting to better understand how the school's approach to education plays out on a daily basis to potentially influence the experiences of students in general, and refugee students, in particular.

In an attempt to explore the possible influence of the school's academic environment on students' ethnic and self-perceptions, I will analyze secondary data in the

form of student assignments determined by the school via participant observation. An analysis of 4th grade students' curricular units may provide insightful results about methods used to educate students about themselves, their cultures, and the cultural experiences of other people. Analyses will be conducted on samples of the students' activities observed and recorded during participant observation. Data collection and analyses also included a review of curriculum and other written material used to academically engage students as well as educate them about their own and other countries, ethnicities, people, and cultures. An analysis of the curricula was expected to provide insight into features of the CDS' acculturative environment as described by Berry (2009) and Rudmin (2009). Lastly, census data of local demographics were collected to contextualize the findings and identify aspects of the surrounding community that may influence CDS' objectives and functionality.

Approach to Data Analysis

This project reflects a mixed methodological study. First, faculty and staff interviews were transcribed and content analysis was used to identify: meanings in the data; common, emergent themes; and, response patterns in the verbiage. Content analysis was also be used to analyze curriculum materials. Content analysis is extremely useful for inquiry into "who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?" (Babbie, 2005, p. 328). In addition, an open coding process was used for participant observation field notes, curriculum materials, students' activities, and any written material uncovered during participant observation to identify themes relating to ethnic identity development, secondary culture acquisition, self-esteem, and academic adjustment. These analytical methods were expected to provide insight into CDS teaching and learning processes and

how CDS influences students' perceptions of themselves and others, as well as their perceptions about their cultural identities and ethnic experiences.

Lastly, univariate statistics of census and city data such as local poverty rates, resettlement patterns, and country of origin contextualized the qualitative results and uncovered possible community demographics that may influence CDS outcomes. In addition to informing literature about the appropriateness of Berry's (2009) acculturation taxonomy theory, as well as its fit within Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecology of human development, findings may provide important applied results and best practices to enhance the educational experiences and quality of life of diverse student groups such as refugee students.

CHAPTER II:

Creating and Cultivating Multicultural School Spaces

In order to examine how a multicultural educational space is created that facilitates both student socialization to U.S. culture and retention of their own (and other) cultures, it is necessary to assess the Cultural Diversity School's (CDS) site. CDS is a charter school for refugee and local children located in a small, but rapidly growing ethnic enclave community in the southeastern region of the U.S. Because of its proximity to a major metropolitan city, since 1980, this community has become a "new gateway" for refugee resettlement (Singer, 2008). In 1998, the idea for CDS was conceived. The school's founders officially formed the 501(c)3 nonprofit, Supporters of CDS (SCDS), dedicated to gaining funding and community support for the creation of CDS (SCDS, personal communication, June 29, 2010). Opened in 2002, CDS is a realization of their desire to create a place where refugees and local residents can draw from the strengths of a diverse neighborhood. The school serves approximately 400 students in kindergarten through sixth grade on two campuses. The Main Campus is located minutes south of the resettlement community and the second site slightly further east.

Exploration of the programs and processes at CDS, fieldwork began in May of 2010 when I was granted permission to explore the campuses. Participant observation at the school occurred for eight days dispersed over two weeks and generally lasted from 9:00AM until about 3:00PM. This period coincides with the end of the school year and enabled me to gain insight into the school's management, operation, and philosophy that

play out on a daily basis, as well as how special events, programs, and celebrations also contribute to the CDS culture. In addition, I was able to observe in-class sessions as well as school events including plays, a chorus concert, a French and Spanish vocabulary bee, the 3rd grade annual science fair, and the school's Field Day. Though arguably short, this fieldwork provided invaluable data because of its co-occurrence with the end of the semester. While exploring the campus, I paid particular attention to: campus rules and mission/vision statements; fliers aimed at students, parents, and volunteers; classroom themes and decorations; curriculum materials; physical appearance of the facility; and, student-student as well as teacher-student interactions. Before my visit, I created an observation rubric and form to structure my inquiry that drew my attention to physical, programmatic, and other logistical aspects of the school (see Appendix for the observation rubric). Initially, site visits were largely guided by the observation template. However, once the specific data on the campus features of interest were collected, I began to focus on reoccurring themes and values. Lastly, on a mandatory furlough day when the school was closed, I spent an additional day visiting the town's city hall and collecting census data. The initial day was spent becoming familiar with the Main Campus, mapping and observing the physical environment, and observing the decorations and iconography in common areas. Subsequent days were spent visiting in-session and empty classes as well as attending school events, primarily at the Main Campus.

Exploration of CDS culture must begin with a profile of the Main Campus. CDS started with and expanded from the Main Campus serving students in kindergarten through 4th grade. The East Campus was established as CDS grew in an effort to extend the school's academic approach to 5th and 6th graders. Although each campus has a

principal, the head principle is stationed on the Main Campus. For many years, SCDS was also headquartered on the Main Campus. In addition, the majority of SCDS and CDS programs aimed at reaching the students and the larger resettlement community take place on the Main Campus because it is where the school originated. Thus the Main Campus is, in many ways, the school's headquarters and is arguably the heart of the CDS community.

Though I did not initiate conversations with members of the CDS community about my research activities, I replied truthfully when asked about my presence on campus. One concern with participant observation as an overt, rather than covert, researcher pertains to subject reactivity (Berg, 2009). The problem with overt observation techniques is that announcing one's presence as a researcher could provoke exaggerated, stifled or generally atypical behavior from those being observed. This concern is rooted in beliefs that interaction with the research field contaminates and jeopardizes the reliability of findings. In using this approach, I was aware of the need to balance transparency with the need to be unobtrusive. However, scholars also acknowledge the benefits of overt participant observation, especially when researching groups and environments that are typically difficult to access (Berg, 2009). Used in conjunction with other methods, such as content analysis of the interviews, participant observation provides a context for findings that other qualitative and quantitative methods have difficulty yielding. Such an approach is also ideal for uncovering potentially unexpected findings in this exploratory study.

In some ways my presence as a researcher only slightly restricted my access to increased opportunities for data collection. For example, a few teachers seemed

uncomfortable with my presence in the classroom. In one kindergarten classroom I visited, I was closely watched by a teacher and assistant teacher as I took notes on the classroom setup, iconography, and books. Although class was not currently in session (the students were having recess on the playground), the tension I felt made it clear that my presence in their classroom was unwanted and possibly disruptive. However, this experience was an outlier and most CDS staff seemed to continue on with their daily rounds despite my presence. Overall, the unexpected interactions I had with personnel drastically improved the richness of the data I was able to access and observe. Although the data gained as a result of talking with CDS personnel and community members during participant observation are presented in these findings, the information gathered from these conversations are reported as general comments rather than direct quotes.

Campus, Context, and Culture

Structural and Programmatic Space

As noted earlier, CDS serves 400 students in kindergarten through sixth grade on two campuses that are located approximately fifteen minutes apart. Courses for kindergarten through fourth grade take place on the Main Campus; fifth and sixth graders attend the East Campus. There are three classrooms for each grade level with an approximate 10:1 student-teacher ratio for each classroom. Thus CDS has a total of 21 classrooms. The first characteristic that distinguishes CDS from the numerous other schools in the area is that the school is housed within two churches. Both campuses share space with and lease space from Methodist and Episcopal churches that have been located in their respective communities for at least 40 years. However, CDS is not ideologically affiliated with either congregation; its sole 9-year relationship is that of a

renter. Although most of the East Campus is predominantly located in parts of the church building, excluding the chapel, the Main Campus has added four modular units to accommodate its growing student body. In spite of these additions, CDS relies on some of the church's infrastructural resources to operate. For example, from Monday through Friday, the church's fellowship hall is used as the school's cafeteria, and office spaces in the church's main building are used as classrooms and the main administrative office. However, with the exception of the use of the fellowship hall and a portion of the main building, CDS is functionally a separate entity. Unlike the entrances to the chapel and main church buildings, both campuses are secured by cameras and a call box at the main entryways that require visitors to either page the front office or use an access code to enter.

Upon entering the school, the corridors are lined with colorful drawings, not unlike what would be seen at any other elementary school. However, this familiar interior is slightly deceiving; in many ways, a strong argument can be made that CDS is truly unlike most other schools. Children of diverse races and ethnicities walk the hallways with chattering and bantering arising in various languages from different friendship circles. Within the mixed groups of friends, I repeatedly witness melodic interplays of accents resulting in distinct compositions from group to group. On the main campus alone, at least 35 different countries are represented in the combined student body, faculty and staff of about 300 people. Yet the high concentration of diversity on this campus is only one of the many aspects of this environment that sets this school apart.

A closer examination of the illustrations on the walls reveals vivid accounts of many of the children's pasts alongside hopeful depictions of the future. Stories about

mothers searching in vain for food to feed their young and scenes depicting skeletons in mountain passes cause me to question whether such images were actually evoked by children. However, pictures illustrating dreams of becoming doctors, dancers and firefighters elicit the realization that these expressions originate from a community comprised of children who, despite traumatic circumstances, have not lost the desire to succeed or thirst for life and happiness.

Another unique aspect of the school is its function as a large, yet intimate family. Children cheerfully greet many of their teachers with hugs or delighted babble, and teachers, despite both the constant flow of children in and out of the school from year to year and the phonetic obstacles that some native English speakers tend to experience when trying to learn non-Western names, know each child by name. Thus I contend that the diverse composition of the school's student body and close relationships that are fostered within their community are two of the myriad characteristics of the school that set CDS apart from the majority of the schools in the county.

Classroom locations seem to be largely influenced by students' ages and grade levels. For example, on the Main Campus, the kindergarten and first grade classrooms are located on the main and lower levels of the main building at the center of campus. Downstairs, past the first grade classrooms as you exit the building, an outdoor path behind the main building leads to a cozy community garden and outdoor classroom. There you find a wooden podium flanked by colorful flowers facing picnic tables that are shaded by a young, but sturdy tree. The outdoor classroom offers views of the cafeteria and other grade level classrooms and parallels the playground and a grassy area used for physical education. In addition, a small herb garden lines one of the paths leading to the

second grade classrooms that is housed in the modular unit closest to the main building. Next, a total of six third and fourth grade classrooms are in a long modular unit nearly behind the fellowship hall. Although use of modular classrooms is not ideal, their close proximity to the main building is logistically important and the presence of the community garden seems to connect the otherwise disparate spaces into a single academic environment. Moreover, the community garden appears to interject elements of nature and tranquility into an otherwise somewhat austere structural space. French and Spanish classes, as well as school programs such as the Inner School and Early Assistance Reading Improvement, take place in two modular units near the parking lot. In addition to the courtyard used as a field for physical education, on Field Day, sections of the parking lot are converted into stations for activities. The campus layout is functional and helps create a space where children can learn and have fun despite space constraints. Though obviously a church from the outside, most of the church's religious displays are out of sight during the school week.

Beyond its descriptive import, the above information provides a backdrop in which the CDS space can be theoretically analyzed. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development theory, microsystems influence individuals' perceptions of their roles as well as how they interact with others and their environment within a given setting. This theory, combined with Rudmin's (2009) description of secondary culture acquisition and aspects of Berry's (2009) acculturation taxonomy environments (i.e., multicultural; "melting pot"; segregational; or exclusionary) can be used to explore possible correlating features between the school's physical and cultural space. In the following subsections I present various descriptive themes that emerge from an

exploration of CDS' environment via participant observation. These findings are then used to consider whether and how an acculturative environment best characterizes CDS. The four descriptive cultural environment themes are: religion, persecution, and injustice; self-expression, agency, and influence on society; connecting cultures; and, sources of student support.

The Cultural Space

Religion, Persecution, and Injustice. Although the church's religious signage and displays are out of sight during the school week, the school informs children about Christianity and other religious beliefs. For example, in the hallways outside the third and fourth grade classrooms, a bulletin board displays a historical timeline of multiple religions and their leaders/founders that had been handwritten by third and fourth grade students. Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Roman Catholicism, Islam, Protestantism, Tibetan Buddhism, and Bahá'í are listed and dated from 2085 BC to 1844 AD in the order shown. This visual tool about religious collectives illustrates CDS' educational imperative to provide a multicultural experience for its students through exposure to various ideological beliefs, values, and traditions. This same board includes another example of the school's attempt to create educationally empowering spaces. The bulletin board also contains numerous sayings handwritten and illustrated by third grade students. Although penmanship and drawing abilities vary, messages about liberative themes are apparent. The following representative quotes illustrate the school's emphasis on justice, freedom, power, and human rights:

"If you can walk you can dance,
If you can talk you can sing!!"

"Live simply that others may simply live."

“Greetings and thanks to the natural world. Greetings and thanks to each other as people.”

“Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can chance the world—indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

“Give me freedom or give me death.”

“No War! No Violence!”

One image is particularly salient and indicative of CDS’ overarching objective. A vivid drawing follows a written exclamation, “Live free or die trying!” The illustration depicts 10 figures outlined in black marker walking toward freedom, designated with a black arrow pointing to the left. By default these same figures are walking away from slavery, demarcated with an arrow pointing to the right. The school’s third grade International Baccalaureate unit (IB) on self-expression stresses the importance of expressing one’s opinion, influencing and persuading others, and political activism. The school’s objective is to “create a strong community spirit, a *Beloved Community*, which would imbue the relationships between staff members, volunteers, parents, students and volunteers with a sense of respect and cooperation toward the achievement of the academic and personal success of the students” (SCDS, personal communication, June 29, 2010). The bulletin board iconography and student expressions pointedly illustrate this objective.

Drawings and posters about racial injustice in the U.S. dominate displays at CDS. However, this may have been due, in part, to the fact that Black History Month had been recently celebrated. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s description of the Beloved Community has been of major significance to the school since its inception. A beloved community, according to Dr. King Jr., requires “a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives” (King Jr., 1966, p. 30). CDS relies on exposure to

diverse beliefs, traditions, and experiences that are united by the idea that everyone has a right to exist and a responsibility to peacefully coexist in order to achieve their goals of qualitative inner change with implications for tangible outcomes. For example, handmade Popsicle stick, paper, rubber glove, and brown paper bag puppets belonging to the “Freedom Fighter Puppet Theatre” decorate the hallway outside of third grade classrooms. Drawings captioned by short descriptions and speech bubbles expose both the irony and senselessness of racial injustice:

If on Christmas I burn the pudding I made a mistake so I take the blame, but why when I am doing no harm am I blamed for the way I look as anyone would be blamed for breaking the law? I am born the way I am. Why am I punished with inequality when it is by pure luck that you are yourself are the way you are and chance that by law you can own and use me like personal property. Maybe we are not the criminals but you and those who treat us as unequals.

Although she is only in third or fourth grade, this student’s observation reflects her understanding of the value that the school places on human rights. Her statement also challenges arbitrarily ascriptive ideologies that place value on individuals by virtue of their appearance. Though formulated in response to racial inequality, this caption shows that CDS is striving to equip students with the critical thinking skills to recognize, question, and confront social inequalities in general.

The first grade hallway features a large Black History Bulletin Board that includes pictures and short descriptions of past and present African American icons from popular culture, scientists, athletes, authors, inventors, leaders, and musicians such as: Dr. Carter G. Woodston; Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; Thurgood Marshall; Jackie Robinson; Rosa Parks; Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune; Dr. Mae Jemison; Oprah Winfrey; President Barack Obama; Fredrick Douglas; Langston Hughes; Dr. George Washington Carver; Harriet Tubman; Dr. Ida Gray Nelson; Dr. Charles R. Drew; Florence Joyner; Arthur

Ashe; Langston Hughes; Alex Haley; Maya Angelou; Bessie Blount; Madame C. J. Walker; Jan Matzeliger; Colin Powell; Eubie Blake; Louis Armstrong; and, Marian Anderson. I contend that continued exposure to these types of visuals as well as student participation in their creation help reinforce CDS values and instills in students the importance of justice, inclusivity, and mutual respect. The visual representations of African American contributions to American culture also expand students' understandings of the diverse and important roles that many people of color have played in American history. Furthermore, it helps students reimagine the place given to contributions of people of color to better understand that "Black History" *is* American History.

In addition to tangible cultural displays, conversations, dialogue, and language are important cultural tools used at CDS to educate and inform. For example, I observed a discussion about justice and freedom during my observation period. While the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher held her class in the media center with seven fourth grade ESOL students, she encouraged each of them to read about their countries of origin. This fourth grade ESOL class consisted of three Burmese students, two Somali students, one Kurdish student, and one student from Sierra Leon. As she talked with her three Burmese students, the teacher referenced Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest in an explanation of the difference between a "free" and "not free" government. Although she contrasted the U.S. government with Burma's, she also commented on the U.S. government's history of treating people poorly when they spoke about inequality and injustice.

This incident is noteworthy for several reasons. First, the incident is important to better understand the school's environment. The teacher's efforts to educate the students about past and present examples of injustice are consistent with the themes present in the IB curriculum, school iconography, and mission statement. Second, this incident is important in reference to my research query pertaining to the educational environment at CDS. The ESOL teacher's efforts to help students familiarize themselves with their own heritages and cultures of origin are characteristic of Berry's (2009) multicultural environment because ethnic and cultural diversity is not only accepted at CDS, but encouraged. Activities involving cultural retention are incorporated in a class used to educate non-native speakers of English about communicating in the English language. Furthermore, this incident is illustrative of an important assumption present in Rudmin's (2009) secondary culture acquisition hypothesis/theory. He posits that mainstream cultures can undergo acculturative change in response to the individuals that comprise the community. The educational environment in this particular ESOL class is constructed to incorporate relevant cultural examples into the students' education. Although classes have set themes and objectives established by the IB curriculum, examples are drawn from the students' diverse backgrounds to familiarize students with their countries of origin as well as facilitate the learning process. It is also noteworthy that this episode is indicative of ways in which CDS educators seem to subscribe and consistently adhere to the school's values. In her critique of the Burmese government's actions, the ESOL teacher made sure to draw the students' attention to the fact that the U.S. government has also been guilty of similar wrongdoings. By keeping past injustices in mind as she

critiqued current social issues, the ESOL teacher and others like her exemplify the critical thinking skills that educators are trying to instill in their students.

Self-Expression, Agency, and Influence on Society. International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum signage displayed throughout the campus stresses the importance of self-expression. The majority of the decorations in the school are students' drawings, writings, and poems. A strong grasp of self-expression is important to this community because it reflects individuals' perceptions about themselves, society, and their place within it. Students' writings also illustrate their connection to and impact on their societies. For example, the following poem illustrates students' understanding about the relationship between people, nature, and the environment:

“Plants”
Don't step on plants.
If you do they will die.
If there are no plants,
We will die.
If you plant a seed,
Water it every single day.
It will grow
In its own way.

The poem above simply and directly conveys the young author's understanding of the role of plants in our ecosystem as well as an understanding about “cause and effect” in relation to individual actions. Similarly, signs related to the IB curriculum in the fourth grade classroom remind students of their connection to the larger society and how interconnectedness influences their own well being. One posted sign asks, “What kind of life do you want?” followed by an explanation of how “change takes place when individuals claim their right in society”. The sign to the right of this one reminds students of how human migrations have brought change over time. The school's 2010-2011 program of inquiry based on the IB curriculum describes this unit as “an inquiry into the

interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities” (International Baccalaureate Organization [IBO], 2009). Students are taught about the structure and function of organizations, how decisions are made in society, as well as economic activities and their impact on humankind and the environment. To further illustrate, “The Action Cycle” posted in a first grade classroom cyclically connects the words “Reflect”, “Choose”, and “Act” with double arrows.

The theme of the annual third grade Science Fair, “The Water Cycle”, provided students with an opportunity to reflect on their actions as well as respond to the actions of others. For example, one student observed, measured, and reported on his daily water consumption. Another student explored differences in the rate at which water evaporated depending on its presence in varying environments. However, many of the third graders experimented with numerous, creative techniques for removing oil from water in light of the March 2010 British Petroleum oil spill. Several others used materials such as Alum, sand, rocks, and carbonation to explore ways to create simple water filtration systems. While some students stood by their tri-fold poster boards which were set-up on their desks, others were encouraged to circulate the classrooms and leave questions and feedback on Post-it® notes for their classmates until it was their turn to present. This science fair gave third graders an opportunity to engage real-world issues, and provided an example of how CDS faculty and staff strive to instill the requisite agency and empowerment they believe students will need to successfully navigate a complex society.

The IB signage connecting human migration to change is particularly interesting given this academic setting and is important to this event. Discussions of human migration are intentionally integrated into coursework in a way that seems to downplay

potentially isolating perceptions of migratory experiences for refugee students. The premise that human migration is a natural phenomenon helps convey the larger message that each individual's voice and perspective is valuable and potentially impactful. Human migration patterns have affected everyone's lives in one way or another, whether they have personally experienced it or not. Consequently, no one student's perspective is more or less valuable as a result of his or her migration experiences. In sum, this belief helps to create a positive and supportive space for CDS faculty and staff to cultivate a sense of belonging and subsequent agency, particularly among refugee and immigrant students.

Participant observation findings also illustrate how CDS influences students' perceptions about themselves and others. The abovementioned activities and visuals strive to educate CDS students on how to navigate and respond to a complex pluralist and multicultural society. The curriculum's objective to teach that each student is a rightful and valuable potential agent of change for their community is supported via forums that require students to engage their own and others' opinions. The findings presented in this section provide support for the presence of an intentionally multicultural environment, characterized by the acceptance of ethnic and cultural diversity and the facilitation of interactions between immigrant and local residents (Berry, 2009). It is evident that CDS accepts diversity, and has constructed a community that heavily relies on the coexistence of multiple perspectives from its ethnically and culturally diverse members. Furthermore, CDS aims to equip its students with the ability to appreciate, navigate, and challenge the worldviews that they encounter on and off-campus. In doing so, students are made aware of various elements of the ecological environment, as described by Bronfenbrenner (1977), that shape their lives in the U.S. and ways to engage with it at different levels.

Furthermore, they are challenged to critique past and current forms of oppression, and are taught that their actions or inactions have the potential to influence other people and societal structures. These findings suggest that CDS aims to empower all students, but particularly refugees—who may question their sense of belonging—to become thoughtful agents in their communities and in the world at large. As evidenced by the religion timeline and overall dedication to the creation of the Beloved Community, the presence of various cultures, languages, and people at CDS discourages the dominance of any particular view of religion, communication, and culture. This necessitates a constant effort to make students aware and appreciative of differences in ethnicity, experiences, and perspectives. By teaching students how to identify injustice and combat it in appropriate ways, CDS strives to empower students to claim a sense of belonging and their rights in society.

Connecting Cultures. Cultural exchange in an environment such as this is inevitable. Photographs in classrooms and conversations with faculty, staff, and parents reveal the existence of an annual, school-wide celebration. In the beginning of the school year, CDS celebrates its more than 40 represented cultures with their own United Nations (UN) Day. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to deviate from the school dress code by wearing traditional garb from their country of origin or their country of choice. Students and faculty then participate in a parade around the Main Campus for the students' families and members of the larger CDS community.

Cultural retention is encouraged through the curriculum, which challenges students to learn academic materials in their native or preferred language in addition to English (IBO, 2009a). For example, I observed this dynamic in one third grade ESOL

class. Five students from Eritrea, Burma, Cuba, Sudan, and Somalia as well as the teacher use encyclopedias and books to locate facts about a specific country. The teacher researches Kurdistan while each student uses the same reference materials to find information on geography, the arts, government structure, crafts, and religions for their country of origin. Though it is not presented in this fashion, this activity makes the students aware of the ways in which their countries and cultures of origin are perceived in documented sources. In this way, the school plays a major role in what and how refugee students learn about their ethnicities. This approach is arguably political. On the one hand, students are learning about their ethnicities from the perspectives of American resources. However, the presence of books and magazines written in other languages, about other cultures, and by people from different countries, suggest that CDS educators attempt to present nuanced representations and perspectives of other cultures to their students. The following example illustrates some of the political undertones associated with process. As the above noted teacher checked on the students' work midway through the class period, she instructed the Burmese student to record both names for their country, Myanmar and Burma. However, she does not explain why two names for the country exist, the context in which either name should be used, or any such detail. Because the use of one name over the other is associated with the country's definition and redefinition of its political and ethnic identity, her decision has important implications for students' full understanding of this political phenomenon ("Should it be Burma", 2007).

In addition to UN Day, other events creatively continue the school's multicultural theme. For example, the school play features performances from all three first grade

classrooms and focuses on three children's fables of French, British, and West African origins. During this particular observation period, "Passport Around the World" is the theme of the school's annual Field Day. Students from the Main and East Campuses convene on the former campus for this event. There are twelve stations, spread out across the campus from the parking lot to the playground. Each represents twelve different countries from almost every continent: Mexico, Germany, Italy, Austria, Australia, Ireland, Egypt, Kenya, France, England, Iceland, and the U.S. Each station is also marked with a poster that includes a picture of the country's flag, a description of its governmental system, and at least one fact about the country's history or culture. In addition, each station is characterized by an activity related to the country profile on the poster. Although the majority of the stations' profiles focus on common, somewhat stereotypical aspects of each country, its description, and its related field day activity (i.e., U.S. and the military; France and pastries; Italy and pasta; England and soccer; Australia and kangaroos; Egypt and camels; Kenya and safaris; Ireland and potatoes), the remaining stations' profiles and related activities are less stereotypical. For example, the profile poster for Mexico—decorated with students' images of the Mexican flag, a burrito and a taco, and the handwritten expressions, "¡Hola!" and "¿Como estas?"—contains the following description:

Mexico is a Spanish-Speaking country about three times the size of Texas. At least three great civilizations, the Mayas, the Almecs, and the Toltecs proceeded the wealthy Aztec empire. Many cities throughout Mexico are popular tourist destinations for US citizens because of their beautiful beaches and coral reefs, which are the rainforests of the ocean. Coral reefs host an extraordinary variety of marine plants and animals, perhaps up to 2 million including one quarter of all marine fish species. It has been estimated that so far only about 10% of these species have been described by scientists. One of many animals of the coral reef are the sponges. Though extremely plant-like in appearance, sponges are actually one of the most primitive animals in the sea. Sponges differ from all other marine invertebrates in that they have no tissue or organs.
Government: Federal Republic

This station's activity involves a sponge relay. Students are divided into two competing teams in parallel lines. The first person from each team has to submerge the team's sponge in a large water receptacle and pass the dripping sponge over their heads to the teammate behind them. The last person in line then empties the remaining water from the sponge into a small plastic bin before racing to the front of the line. Each team races against the other, determined to be the first to fill their bucket. Teachers facilitate the activities at each station, with teachers from the countries represented present at that station if possible and/or desired. An Austrian teacher staffed the Austria station, while a British teacher facilitated activities at the England station. Teachers also function as tour guides, transporting their group of students from one station to another and obtaining "passport stickers" for their travelers along the way. In this way, each station operates simultaneously and traveling from one station to another occurs smoothly. Toward the end of the day, students either engage in pick-up games of cricket or soccer, scamper on the playground, interact with friends, or prepare for the final field day event—a students versus teachers basketball game. The latter events are varied, but still include activities that reflect cultural diversity.

There are at least two other significant annual events that take place at CDS during the observation period. The first is a Choir Concert, which occurred three days after Field Day. The concert involves students in the first through fourth grade classes and takes place midday and outdoors. The kindergarten students, CDS faculty, and CDS parents attend. The first grade choir sings songs from France, Egypt, Spain, and South Africa and use hand motions as well as instruments. The second grade chorus sings songs from China and India, the third grade students perform an American "Shaker classic",

and the fourth grade performs an American Revolutionary War song. The third and fourth grade choirs then unite to sing an arrangement of Bob Marley's "Trench Town Rock." The Choir Concert concludes with students, teachers, and parents singing "Una Famillia" in English. However, many of the songs are rendered in their originally-written language.

The second noteworthy event is the French and Spanish vocabulary bee that involves second, third, and fourth grade students and requires them to orally either provide a definition when given a word, or provide a word when presented with a definition for French or Spanish words. Students are questioned in the language they are studying. For answers given in French or Spanish, emphasis is placed on pronunciation. The French and Spanish words and definitions—presented in French or Spanish—are read by two of the three third grade classroom teachers, as opposed to the French or Spanish teachers, who are fluent in these languages. The first, second, and third place winners receive blue, red, and white ribbons, respectively; each student receives a certificate of participation. School-wide activities such as these provide students with an appreciation for verbal communication and personal connection with other cultures.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, cultural exchange is an integral part of the CDS culture. Events such as UN Day and the passport-themed field day provide students, faculty, and the larger CDS community with opportunities to celebrate diversity in dress, food, history, and traditions as members of the community learn from one another. The school plays, choir concert, and French and Spanish vocabulary bees emphasize the exchange of narratives, songs, and language. In this way, CDS creates multiple avenues for various forms of cultural exposure, exchange, and celebration.

Sources of Student Support. The CDS culture includes numerous sources of support for students, particularly refugee students, families, and the larger refugee community. Many if not most of the faculty and staff at CDS take on roles as mentors for students, particularly refugee students, who seem to be having trouble adjusting socially. The main purpose of this mentoring is to provide refugee students with one-on-one attention through relationship-building and engaging in fun activities such as trips to the park, a museum, or even informal meetings. As noted earlier, ESOL classes are provided by grade level for non-native speakers of English who are having trouble with writing and/or speaking in English. These classes also seem to be used for cultural reflection as well as retention.

There are also at least four fundamental programs that operate within the school, during the school day, after school, and on the weekends: Early Assistance Reading Improvement (ERI), the Inner School (IS), the After Class Institute (ACI), and a Weekend School (WS). The ERI program offers remedial reading and writing instruction for kindergarten through third grade students who have experienced interrupted schooling or who have fallen behind in their reading or writing for varied reasons. This program releases students from classes during the school day to offer instruction. IS pairs immigrant and refugee students in kindergarten through fourth grade with former teachers and volunteers to tutor them in any subject. Although IS volunteers largely provide academic support, they also function in ways similar to CDS faculty and staff mentors because they engage in extracurricular activities with students and provide emotional support. Although some student participation in IS occurs during the school day, much of the participation in IS takes place after and outside school. As the name

suggests, ACI takes place on campus after school. ACI coordinates various extracurricular activities in addition to offering students tutoring and a place to study. Although the students' classroom teachers recommend certain students for participation in ERI and IS programs, WS is open to any CDS student and their family as well as the larger refugee community. WS offers weekend classes, programs, and activities for CDS students and community members who are too old to attend the school but who may need help reading, writing, and communicating in English. The program also offers help navigating daily life in the community. WS gatherings can also function as social and support groups for various community members and forums for cultural exchange. These programs, particularly the IS and WS, play a significant role in helping refugee and immigrant students and families adjust to life and schooling in the U.S.

CDS parents are highly involved sources of student support. The school's Teachers Staff and Parent Organization (TSPO) uses meetings, listserv emails, and fliers to communicate with and support each other as parents, as well as tackle issues impacting students, CDS teachers, and CDS community members. For example, CDS parents coordinate the collection of school supplies, uniforms, and clothing for students whose families cannot afford them, and are involved in food drives in which volunteers deliver food donated by CDS parents and the local food bank to newly resettled and struggling refugee families. In addition, CDS parent volunteers attempt to use their network(s) to: find and disseminate employment information for refugee parents; alert each other of coupons and discounts; and, fundraise for the school. They also attend and keep one another informed of CDS Board of Directors Meetings; they also locate childcare for parents who will be attending. Moreover, regular Ethnic Dinner Nights and potlucks are

one way for parents to socialize as well as support each other and CDS students. As described by one CDS community member, these dinner nights and potlucks typically involve an assortment of food prepared by CDS immigrant and refugee parents. Although adult attendees are charged \$10, funds raised usually go to the family or families responsible for preparing the food. In the past, parents have donated their time and food; student members of school extracurricular activities, such as the boys' soccer team, wait on Ethnic Dinner Nights attendees in tuxedo T-shirts to raise funds for team equipment and uniforms. Thus parents play a large and important role in the lives of students as well as the larger community. Furthermore, SCDS, the nonprofit organization that supports the school, also collaborates with CDS and community services to provide programs year-round that directly benefit refugee students. For instance, SCDS has partnered with local refugee service organizations to organize educational summer camps that take place on CDS' campus that are open to refugee students regardless of whether they attend CDS or local public schools during the school year.

The existence of the SCDS, ERI, IS, ACI, WS programs and high parental involvement are significant in light of the theoretical lenses used to examine processes at CDS. Parents, volunteers, and program coordinators are highly involved in students' lives at home and emotional well being, revealing an awareness of the ways in which multiple microsystems influence student performance and behavior in the classroom (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; 1986). The positive relationship that exists between CDS parents—who are also a mix of locals, immigrants, and refugees—and the larger community provides evidence of the existence of a multicultural acculturative environment as described by Berry (2009). Furthermore, the existence of an environment

that embraces, rather than merely allows, influence of immigrant and refugee groups is arguably an example of secondary culture acquisition at work within this resettlement community (Rudmin, 2009).

Theoretical Implications of the CDS Experience

CDS engages with many of the systemic levels outlined in Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1986) ecological environment. The IB curriculum and the culture at CDS encourage students to become familiar with and challenge ways in which the world works. CDS aims to help students understand how exosystemic variables (i.e., governmental systems), macrosystemic forces (i.e., racial hierarchies), and chronosystemic factors (i.e., human migration patterns) can shape individual experiences for better or worse. Furthermore, CDS support systems, exemplified by their TSPO and school programs, aim to beneficially shape student experiences on microsystemic and mesosystemic levels. Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1986) ecological environment and ecological approach to understanding human development is not only relevant, but necessary for gaining insight into the academic adjustment and acculturation experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugee students at CDS.

Berry (2009) and Rudmin's (2009) acculturation taxonomy theory and secondary culture acquisition hypothesis are also relevant and valuable tools that provide insight into the acculturation and adjustment processes that take place at CDS. Findings via participant observation offer support for the presence of a multicultural community as described in Berry's (2009) model. CDS parental and programmatic support systems provide evidence of this, multicultural school events, IB curriculum and signage, and pedagogical approaches—particularly within the ESOL classroom—provide further

evidence of multiculturalism. However, whether or not these actions translate into academic adjustment as exemplified by students' grades are unknown based on participant observation findings alone.

Rudmin's (2009) critiques Berry's work on acculturation, arguing that use of the term "acculturation" tends to stigmatize the cultural learning processes experienced by members of immigrant groups because it positions immigrant acculturation as drastically different from the cultural learning processes experienced by members of native-born groups. Moreover, he asserts that everyone undergoes a general process of cultural learning throughout the course of their lives. These findings offer support for some aspects of Rudmin's (2009) secondary culture hypothesis. For example, CDS founders created the current educational environment in an effort to accommodate the needs of their immigrant neighbors. Arguably every program, programmatic feature, and aspect of the CDS environment functions with the needs of its refugee students in mind because the school itself is a response to the growing presence of resettled refugees in the community. In this sense, native-born and immigrant members of CDS are also involved in their own secondary culture acquisition processes. From the start, refugee and immigrants' varying perspectives and experiences are used in conjunction with those of the native-born founders to formulate the ideology and values present at the school. New and old members are invited to contribute to the culture of the school. As this happens, everyone is constantly adjusting to new additions to the community while keeping the core values of mutual respect, appreciation for diversity, and inclusivity at the forefront.

CHAPTER III:

Contrasting the Frameworks that Drive CDS Curricula

In order to explore the material used to academically engage students and educate them about their own and other countries, people, and cultures, it is necessary to assess the main curricula employed by the Cultural Diversity School. CDS combines the use of two curricula, International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP) and State-Mandated Curriculum (SMC), to fulfill education requirements as a charter school as well as educate students in ways consistent with the school's core beliefs. Findings from this chapter provides insight into how CDS endeavors to provide its minority students—particularly refugees and immigrants—with a positive sense of self and agency through its choice of curricula. Given Berry (2009) and Rudmin's (2009) approaches to acculturation and the implications of their findings for refugees students' sense of belonging and agency, an assessment of underlying values evident in each curricula will be valuable. Furthermore, in light of the school's aim to teach students how to be active change agents in the community and larger society, it will be important to examine whether and how the curricula encourage them to attend to various structural forces as outlined in Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1986) ecological environment framework.

Overview of the State-Mandated Curriculum

The State-Mandated Curriculum (SMC) presents teachers with the superintendent's general expectations for public school students. Although certain subjects make connections between skills that should have been developed in former

years, as well as how skills learned in a given grade will form the basis for mastery in the future, the SMC is divided into self-contained sections by grade level. Thus isolating the curriculum goals that specifically target fourth grade students is relatively straightforward. The SMC is easily accessible online and can be downloaded free from the state's Department of Education website. There are multiple links for various components of the curriculum. One file contains the core curriculum for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Elective subjects such as Fine Arts, Health Education, and Modern Languages & Latin are not included in the general curriculum file, but have curricular information available to download from the website. For the purposes of this project, only the core curriculum file is analyzed. The five core subjects outlined in the SMC for fourth graders are: Reading and English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, U.S. History to 1860, and Physical Education. Each core subject forms its own section within the curriculum and describes how various key elements contribute to necessary skill building and mastery of the subject for that grade level. Each subject is summarized below.

Reading and English Language Arts. Analysis of the content in this section reveals at least six areas (or categories) of emphasis used to transmit reading, writings, and communication skills. Expectations are marked by emphasis on general skill building such as paying attention to an author's perspective when reading and (less often) paying attention to the student's own perspective when reading, writing, and communicating. There is also emphasis on the application of learned skills, the identification and use of evidence to support ideas when reading and writing, and familiarization with social and language standards—largely Standard English conventions—when reading, writing, and

speaking. The underlying and explicitly mentioned reason for this is because use of Standard English conventions is believed to reflect “good manners” and is thus necessary for legitimacy when communicating (Cox, 2006b, p. 5). Thus students are instructed in grammar and “appropriateness.” They are also expected to write legibly in cursive. When speaking, listening, and communicating effectively in the classroom, fourth graders are expected to develop skills—such as speaking persuasively or with personality—that are important for interactions in the classroom with teachers, students, and groups as well as in society. This section of the SMC for fourth graders also expects students to acknowledge the influence of the media in its ability to shape people’s perspectives and to evaluate its ability to do so. Students are also expected to be able to identify ways in which the media functions as a source of information and entertainment. However, there is no apparent emphasis on gaining the skills needed to question the media as a source of information or as a socializing agent.

Mathematics. The SMC recommends that teachers incorporate the learning and application of mathematical concepts into real world contexts such that students gain knowledge of how to practice this skill themselves. Emphasis is placed on the four basic operations—addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division—as well as the order of operations including use of parentheses. Students are also expected to be able to use commonly recognized measuring units to calculate weight. Fourth graders acquire skills that allow them to perform math and computations mentally without calculators. They are exposed to the basics of geometry, such as angles, planar shapes, and solids. Students are also introduced to algebraic problem solving using symbols to represent missing values.

Finally, fourth graders are expected to be able to create and interpret pictorial representations of data such as line graphs, Venn diagrams, and bar graphs.

Science. The fourth grade science curriculum is based on the American Association for the Advancement of Science's (AAAS) Project 2061 *Benchmarks for Science Literacy* curriculum as a result of the SMC's alignment with the National Research Council's *National Science Education Standards*. Thus this portion of the curriculum is explicitly performance standards-driven. Students are taught to use their acquired skills in this area to distinguish between their observations and ideas, as well as to record or illustrate instructions in a way that will allow others to carry out a scientific procedure (i.e., exposure to the scientific method). Students are also expected to acknowledge that scientific investigation does not always yield the same results. Acquired skills should also allow them to make judgments about objects' similarities or differences based on differing conditions. Students acquire skills to identify changes in patterns using graphs and tables, and skills to critically engage claims made by experts or others outside of the student's realm of expertise. Curiosity, honesty, openness, and skepticism are crucial for their understanding of how the world works. Students integrate the skills developed in the areas of Reading and English Language Arts as well as in Mathematics to pursue inquiry, analyze information, and obtain answers. Moreover, exposure to systems and how parts affect the whole allows students to conceptualize change and consider its effects in the real world. Scientific knowledge acquired from the past is used to help them contextualize what is known about science and the world today.

Three content areas are covered in fourth grade Science: Earth Science, Physical Science, and Life Science. While studying Earth Science, students learn information

about: the stars, the solar system, the phases and consequent effects of the moon; seasons, weather patterns and changes; and finally, the various states of water and the basics of the water cycle (i.e., evaporation, condensation, and precipitation). The Physical Science module introduces them to the production and behavior of light and sound. In addition, students are introduced to use of simple machines, the basic concept of force and its influences on variations in speed and motion, and the basic concept of gravity. Lastly, in the Life Science content area, teachers introduce the ecosystem, food chain, and how natural and man-made changes in the environment impact an ecosystem or an organism's ability to face the threat of extinction.

U.S. History to 1860. According to the SMC, students formally study the history of the U.S. for the first time. Four content areas—history, geography, civics, and economics—are integrated through the study of American history. In the history module, students learn about: the lives of six Native American tribes (i.e., Inuit, Kwakiutl, Nez Perce, Hopi, Pawnee, and Seminole); “European exploration” in North America and corresponding conflict between Europeans and Native Americans; and, the accomplishments of Spanish, French, and English explorations. The SMC identifies six historical figures with which students should be familiar: John Cabot, Vasco Núñez de Balboa, Juan Ponce de León, Christopher Columbus, Henry Hudson, and Jacques Cartier. The content area then transitions to explore some of the experiences of different groups of people—large land owners, farmers, artisans, women, indentured servants, slaves, and Native Americans—within the formative years of British colonial America. When studying the American Revolution, emphasis is placed on an understanding of the people involved, reasons, and necessity behind the Declaration of Independence, as well as its

role as a voice of dissent in opposition to an oppressive European regime. The key figures related to this time period are: King George III, George Washington; Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Benedict Arnold, Patrick Henry, and John Adams. Students briefly explore challenges faced by the post-colonial nation such as the rights of states, the Great Compromise, and slavery. Heavy emphasis is placed on the creation of the three branches of government, their functions and capabilities, and the creation, importance, and function of the Bill of Rights. The last events and ideas explored in this module pertain to general overviews of the abolitionist and suffrage movements. Teachers lead discussions on the biographies of Harriet Tubman and Elizabeth Cady Stanton as well as explain Sojourner Truth's importance in the abolition and suffrage movements.

The geography module expects students to understand the role that physical geography played in: the areas that Native Americans occupied; the early settlers' ability (or inability) to adapt to their physical environments; and, the economic activities practiced in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern colonies. An understanding of geography is also important for learning about strategies used during the American Revolution, and how geography influenced westward expansion. In the civics content area, they are expected to know the significance of the Declaration of Independence and well as how "We the People" is a reflection of the consent of the governed. Although students are taught the functions, powers, and limitations of the federal government, the importance of the First Amendment is the only Constitutional Amendment discussed in this content area. Positive character traits—honesty, patriotism, courage, and trustworthiness—of unnamed key historical figures and leaders are also emphasized in this module. Finally, the SMC highlights the ways in which students will be expected to

identify and understand the importance of democracy and its relationship to personal and collective beliefs and principles such as respecting the rights of others, promoting the common good, obeying reasonable laws, and participating in civic life (i.e., regularly obtaining information; voting; volunteering; and, communicating with public officials).

Economics, the final module, provides students with a basic knowledge of trade, voluntary exchange, and how it promotes economic activity. Examples are taken from expeditions to North America and experiences in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern colonies to illustrate how specialization improves standards of living and to explain the idea of opportunity costs. Students also study how prices incentivize and discourage behavior and choices. Furthermore, they apply this knowledge to an understanding of various elements of a personal budget and why spending and savings behaviors are important. Finally, they learn about the impact of technological advancements on business productivity.

Physical Education. The SMC aims to encourage student engagement in activities that hone motor skills needed for participation in other types of physical activities. Much of the emphasis in this area is on techniques related to catching, dribbling, and passing balls typically involved in sports such as American football, soccer, baseball, basketball and hockey. Teachers or coaches also convey the importance of strategy during gameplay. Students' abilities to follow rhythmic patterns are explored through jump ropes and dance routines. An example provided in the SMC is the tinikling dance, a traditional dance native to the Philippines that involves coordination between participants using bamboo poles and dancers. Moreover, the focus in this content area is participation in regular physical activity, especially with teammates when possible, to

foster enjoyment, and an understanding of why physical activity is an important part of daily life. This is the first year students are expected to take criterion-referenced fitness assessments and to understand which health-related areas the national tests attempt to measure. For example, they are expected to understand that the “sit and reach” exercise is used to measure flexibility, and that “pull-up” exercises are used to assess upper-body strength. Furthermore, students are expected to express a self-motivated interest in engaging and improving in these activities.

The physical education module is also used to foster desirable social behavior. Students are expected to manage conflicts that may arise in team-based settings using various strategies such as rock-paper-scissors or submitting to final decisions made by a team captain or referee. Encouraging others, including others, and providing constructive feedback to team members during gameplay are highly encouraged. Physical education activities are additionally expected to hone students’ abilities to work independently or attend to their individual task while on a team. Generally speaking, engagement in various forms of physical activity is viewed as an important aspect of physical wellness and self-expression.

SMC and Implications for Multicultural Learning

Much of the learning in this curriculum focuses on teaching students facts tied to broad societal norms and values. As mentioned previously in the brief *Reading and English Language Arts* summary, students are expected to understand how the media functions as a source of information, however, there is no apparent emphasis on questioning the validity of this information source and its potential influence on societal norms, values, beliefs, or behavior. While this critical perspective is arguably present in

the Science content area, it is unclear why such critical thinking skills are emphasized in some areas and not in others. Similarly, in the Science module, students are taught to make judgments about similarities or differences in the midst of differing conditions. Specifically, the SMC states, “[the students] determine whether or not a comparison is fair if the conditions are different for each thing being compared” (Cox, 2006a, p. 3). Yet this principle is not explicitly integrated into multiple content areas, particularly in History or Social Studies areas that deal with the various ethnic groups that did and do comprise the U.S.

The History module also lacks this critical lens. It fails to encourage teachers to provide an explicitly critical perspective of the way in which America was established. Major historical events that had and still have negative ramifications for minority groups such as Native Americans and African Americans today are glossed over at best. For example, in the history module, slavery is vaguely grouped with states’ rights, the Great Compromise, and general “challenges” that a developing America faced. Furthermore, it is depicted as an “economic activity” in the geography module of this same content area. While these descriptions are partially true, it is highly problematic that critical perspectives on the impact of New Englanders’ actions on the lives of marginalized groups are missing.

Lastly, in the Civics module of the U.S. History content area, students are introduced to laws and how they relate to American beliefs and values. However, the SMC does not encourage students to actively reevaluate whether laws are just. The curriculum fails to encourage students to discuss how to determine whether laws are reasonable, and in doing so, which laws benefit whom in various historical contexts.

Again, this crucial critical lens is glaringly absent from this portion of the curriculum. A connected, but different critique is that the fourth grade chapter of the SMC provides little to no detail on modes of instruction. Though this can be beneficial because it allows for flexibility and instruction based on the students' needs, this can also be detrimental. Although some teachers may correct for specific deficiencies, the SMC's failure to mention the value of critical perspectives can translate into differential learning and differential opportunity for the acquisition of this important skill.

Aside from its mention of the *National Science Education Standards* in the Science content area, the SMC provides very little transparency in regard to its assessments and their relationship to No Child Left Behind, or any assessments or standards. Thus, the SMC lacks a clear overarching framework for the importance inherent in the acquisition of its emphasized skills. The SMC fails to answer the following essential questions; Why is this type of education important? What type of people are students supposed to become? and, Why does this knowledge and this skill set matter for their inclusion and participation in American society or the world? Answers to these questions would provide the critical context to better acculturate well-rounded, culturally relative students who are also critical thinkers.

Overview of International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program Curriculum

The International Baccalaureate (IB) mission statement reveals the International Baccalaureate Organization's (IBO) objective to develop inquisitive, educated, and compassionate lifelong and internationally-minded learners who can effectively and respectfully collaborate with others to impact the world in a positive way. The IB learner profile lists ten desired traits for the development of an internationally-minded person. In

summary, IB learners are: 1) naturally curious inquirers who conduct inquiry and think independently; 2) characterized by the acquisition and use of interdisciplinary knowledge; 3) thinkers concerned with problem-solving and ethical decision-making; 4) effective and collaborative multilingual and multifaceted communicators; and, 5) principled and social justice-oriented. Moreover, they are: 6) students who rely on knowledge of their personal histories and multiple perspectives to foster an open-mind; 7) service-oriented and caring, seeking positive change in their communities; 8) risk-takers who can articulate and defend their beliefs; 9) students who understand how emotional, intellectual, and physical balance benefits their well-being; and, 10) reflective, such that they demonstrate and understand the strengths and limitations of the personal and outside knowledge that impacts their learning and personal development. The IB curriculum makes it clear that the attributes associated with an IB learner are “appropriate to, and achievable by, all primary year students” (International Baccalaureate Organization [IBO], 2009a, p. 3). This being the case, the content of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP) curriculum is characterized by differential manifestations of key principles by age range or level of maturity, rather than differential content by grade level.

The IB PYP curriculum consists of three major components, the written, the taught, and the assessed curriculum. The written curriculum pertains to knowledge, concepts, skills, issues, ideas, and attitudes conveyed to students, as well as the demonstration of these elements through practice. The taught curriculum places emphasis on methodology, pedagogy, and the provision of in-service support. Lastly, the assessed curriculum focuses on an appraisal of the learning that takes place to help educators

remember the purpose behind this approach. In the handbook, these components are described as an iterative process and depicted in a circle with double arrows connecting the three aspects. The IB curriculum in general also attends to dynamics that should be in place to influence school culture. As students are developing into internationally-minded life-long learners, this curriculum asserts that the school itself should be comprised of a community partnership of life-long learners that includes students, parents, and teachers. Furthermore, as students learn using the skills and approaches to knowledge that they gain from the curriculum, parents, teachers, and administrators are expected to learn in the same vein. For the purposes of this comparison, in part because the SMC lacks attention to pedagogical and assessment detail, I attend to the subject areas and ideas presented that primarily pertain to similar aspects of the IB PYP written curriculum.

Written Curriculum. Six trans-disciplinary ideas comprise the type of knowledge that the IB PYP written curriculum desires to convey. *Who We Are* encourages students to examine their own beliefs and values, as well as their relationships within their immediate families, friends, community and cultures. They also examine meanings associated with “being human” as well as their consequent rights and responsibilities. In *Where We Are In Place And Time*, students explore their personal histories, their homes, journeys, and the explorations and migrations of human populations. Local and global perspectives are used to examine the relationships and interconnectedness between individuals and societies. *How We Express Ourselves* requires them to explore and express their feelings, ideas, beliefs, values and culture through use of various forms of creativity and to build an appreciation for the aesthetic. In *How The World Works*, students obtain information about the natural (i.e., physical

and biological) and the socially constructed (i.e., human society) world, as well as how people obtain and use information about the natural world to impact their societies. Next, *How We Organize Ourselves* examines the interconnectedness of human-made communities and systems, how organizations are structured and function, societal decision-making strategies, economic activities, and their impacts on people and the environment. Finally, *Sharing The Planet* encourages them to understand: their rights and responsibilities in a world that necessitates the sharing of finite resources; relationships within and between communities; how these realities and relationships influence access to equal opportunities; and, the importance of peace and conflict resolution.

Within these trans-disciplinary ideas, there are eight key concepts that are central to the learning process outlined in the IB curriculum: form, function, causation, change, connection, perspective, responsibility, and reflection. *Form* presupposes that everything can be characterized, observed, described and identified. *Function* relates to an understanding that everything in society has a purpose or behaves in ways that can be examined. *Causation* reminds students of the influence of past actions on the present and present actions on the future. It also asserts the idea that things happen due to causal relationships. The main idea behind *change* is that it is natural, inevitable, and universal. *Connection* characterizes the world as an interacting and interrelated system where the actions of one component affect others. *Perspective* highlights the perspective that knowledge is moderated by differing viewpoints from individuals, groups, cultures, or disciplines, which in turn influences interpretations, understandings, and findings. All of these content areas are important for IB inquiry and development of learner profiles. Next, *responsibility* examines how people make choices based on their

understanding of situations and how their consequent actions influence others. Finally, *reflection* relates to different ways of knowing, methods of reasoning, the importance of thinking about conclusions, and the necessity behind assessing the quality and reliability of evidence used to draw conclusions.

In general, the IB curriculum encourages the development of thinking, social, communication, self-management, and research skills. Each of these skills has between six and eight desired actions associated with them to specify intended outcomes. The expected attitudes (i.e., appreciation, commitment, confidence, cooperation, creativity, curiosity, empathy, enthusiasm, independence, integrity, respect, and tolerance), though not identical, align closely with the traits of an internationally-minded IB learner profile. According to the IB curriculum, these socially responsible attitudes reflect what students ought to feel, value, and demonstrate. Finally, the written curriculum outlines how students are expected to translate their values, knowledge, and beliefs into action. Action is described as an essential component of the learning process. The IB curriculum suggests that the entire learning process is intended to culminate in empowerment, “the power to choose to act; to decide on their actions; and to reflect on these actions in order to make a difference in and to the world” (IBO, 2009a, p. 25). Action, or inaction as a legitimate choice at times, is expected to extend student learning and to impact the wider society.

Subject Areas. There are six broad subject areas addressed in the IB curriculum: Language; Mathematics; Science; Social Studies; Personal, Social, and Physical Education; and, The Arts. The following paragraphs provide a brief description of the values inherent in each.

The *Language* subject area identifies language learning as the facilitation of three intertwined processes: learning language, learning about language, and learning through language. The IB curriculum asserts the use of students' personal experiences, needs, and interests as a starting point for teaching language, about it, and through it. Teachers are also expected to encourage non-native speakers of the dominant language of instruction to learn about language and other subjects in their native language as a means for personal development, self-esteem as a result of their ethnic and linguistic identity, and maintenance of cultural identity. The teaching of oral, visual, and written aspects of language is based on the premise that language has both receptive and expressive dimensions. Consequently, listening and speaking are emphasized in the oral language strand², the importance of viewing and presenting are highlighted in the visual language component, and reading and writing are stressed in the written language strand. In addition, each of these strands has five corresponding phases that trace student development in their understanding of various strands of language use and learning as they apply to the curriculum's larger objectives.

Mathematics, the next subject area of the curriculum, is described as a powerful universal language for describing and analyzing the world. As such, students are encouraged to consider it an instrument for communicating and problem-solving. As with language learning, students are encouraged to draw from their personal experiences, needs, and knowledge as a starting point for learning about and using mathematics. From their personal points of reference, students translate their own experiences into an understanding of how they construct meaning. They are then taught how to associate this

² "Strand" is terminology used in the IB PYP curriculum.

meaning with symbols, which are applied with understanding in classroom and real world contexts. The five mathematics strands described in the IB curriculum are: data handling; measurement; shape and space; pattern and function; and, number. The curriculum explicitly connects learning in mathematics to the broader knowledge and concepts central to the IB curriculum and development of the IB learner profile.

The *Science* subject area encourages students to value and be aware of biological, physical, and chemical elements of the world as well as the relationships between them. The four scientific strands described in the IB curriculum are: living things; earth and space; materials and matter; and, forces and energy. An understanding of science and how science and technology constantly change is important for students' abilities to incorporate inquiry and ingenuity into the learning process. This approach is used to shape students' understandings of the world such that the acquisition, analysis, and critique of scientific knowledge helps them understand the implications of their own and others' actions on each other and the environment. Through this approach, students should be able to apply their understanding of science to real world contexts and informed decision-making. According to the curriculum, science is universally important regardless of an individual's gender, cultural or linguistic background, race, or ethnicity. Thus the curriculum encourages the development of knowledge of and appreciation for multiethnic and multicultural scientific contributions.

Pedagogically, the science subject area is conceptually driven and skill-based rather than content-driven. Teachers are expected to facilitate a learning process that uses multiple classroom and real world contexts to help students develop a scientific worldview that balances an understanding of how meaning is constructed with the

acquisition of knowledge and skills. As stated in the other subject areas, students' personal experiences are used as a starting point for learning and inquiry. Thus they are encouraged to ask questions that are personally important and pursue various scientific approaches for answers. In this way, the learning process is structured to allow students to take responsibility for self-initiated inquiry. The IB curriculum also attempts to shape teachers' approaches to scientific inquiry using the IB eight key concepts and corresponding questions discussed in the aforementioned overview of the written curriculum.

Social Studies is described as “the study of people in relation to their past, their present and their future, their environment and their society” (IBO, 2009a, p. 103). Students explore their cultural and personal identities; this self-reflection and situated understanding is considered necessary for an individual's ability to participate in their classroom, school, community and society. It is also important for the development of intercultural respect and appreciation for others' backgrounds, beliefs, traditions, and values. To further these goals, this particular subject area strongly and explicitly focuses on reducing prejudice and discrimination in the classroom and beyond. The social studies learning process is action-oriented, such that the extent to which key values are grasped is measured by students' willingness and ability to enact change in their communities. The IB PYP curriculum advocates for the use of context-specific content to convey the values central to this subject area, but also relies on teachers' abilities to make connections between different contexts to demonstrate the universal applicability of central social studies concepts. The five general topics covered in this subject area are: human systems and economic activities; social organization and culture; continuity and change through

time; human and natural environments; and, resources and the environment. Conflict, power, ownership, and distribution are related concepts introduced in each topic area.

The *Personal, Social, and Physical Education (PSPE)* subject area focuses on and promotes integrating the development of individuals' physical, emotional, spiritual, cognitive, and social wellbeing into every aspect of the curriculum. This subject area attends to the creation of healthy dialogue between school and home to jointly influence and enhance student learning. In addition, the PSPE perspective considers the ways in which teachers' attitudes and knowledge about the learning process influence student outcomes. Thus ongoing professional development is advised to ensure that teachers' values are aligned with those of the curriculum. The PSPE subject area focuses on three strands: identity, active living, and interactions. The identity strand helps students place value on self-reflection, cultural influences, adversity and resilience, and an understanding of how feelings of self-worth and esteem affect learning and interactions with others. The active living strand encourages students to: develop and maintain healthy lifestyles and make healthy choices; understand the body's response to exercise; cultivate motor skills and explore how the body can be used for self-expression; and, promote safe lifestyle choices. This topic also explores the interrelation between individuals' choices and their consequent effect on the wellbeing of others. Thus students are taught that they are responsible for making informed choices and evaluating the widespread consequences of their potential actions. The final strand expands on this idea of interconnectedness and relates the impact of our actions to effects on the environment as well as on others. The related concepts presented in this subject area are; belonging, citizenship, community, conflict, conformity, control, culture, discrimination, fair play,

interdependence, justice, leadership, peace, preservation, reparation, safety, stereotype, and team work.

Finally, *the arts*—specifically dance, drama, music, and visual arts—are described as crucial analytical tools that allow students to develop a sense of self, express themselves, convey knowledge and meaning, and better understand their world. The IB PYP curriculum also notes that all learning and inquiry do not take place through language alone. Thus the arts provide students with opportunities to interpret, understand, and respond to their experiences as well as “engage with historical, cultural, and social perspectives” (IBO, 2009a, p. 125). When responding to the work of other artists, students are encouraged to critically examine how it relates to “issues of culture and identity” (IBO, 2009a, p. 125). An exploration of the arts also allows them to identify and celebrate uniqueness and similarities between individuals and groups. In addition, creative uses of technology and multimedia are incorporated into this learning process in an effort to fuel innovation. In these ways, this subject area prepares students to fully engage in multiple societal arenas. The same way that the language subject area focuses on both reception and expression, learning in the arts focuses on both creation and response. In each form of the arts, teachers are encouraged to expose students to dances, drama, music, and visual arts situated in various historical and cultural contexts. Broadening the range of exposure to arts provides students with multiple opportunities to create as well as respond in their own ways to numerous artistic forms. Each of the aforementioned subject areas attempts to promote students with a specific body of knowledge, set of experiences, and thought processes to help them become well balanced citizens in a global society.

Comparisons and Contrasts of IB PYP and SMC

The SMC aims to equip students with specific facts and skills based on their grade level. In contrast, the IB PYP curriculum focuses on the holistic development of students' thought processes and worldviews. Although the SMC allows room for multicultural approaches and encourages the incorporation of Filipino dance in physical education, the IB PYP curriculum is explicitly and intentionally multicultural. Furthermore, the latter curriculum relates the ways in which information is presented in the classroom to both how students develop a sense of self-esteem and engage in self-directed learning. Moreover, the IB PYP integrates teaching, assessment and content into its curriculum; in contrast, the teaching and assessment aspects of the learning and teaching process are not explicitly mentioned throughout the SMC. In this way, the IB PYP offers guidance for the integration of values, educational content, perspectives on learning, and personal development. In contrast, the SMC provides educators with the content needed to provide students with basic skills, but does not encourage consistent attention to connections between learning and personal development. The utility of the SMC resides in its aims to provide students with basic communication and assessment skills as well as exposure to mainstream American values. However, the SMC plays a minimal role beyond this at CDS. Instead, the school culture, values, pedagogy, and practices are almost entirely driven by IB PYP curriculum. Thus the following analysis focuses on the theoretical significance of the latter curriculum.

Theoretical Implications and the IB PYP

Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1986) ecology of human development, Berry's (2009) acculturation taxonomy, and Rudmin's (2009) secondary culture learning hypothesis can

be used to interpret these curriculum findings in terms of the following two research questions: What elements, if any, of the CDS environment are characteristic of one or more aspects of Berry's (2009) acculturation taxonomy environments (i.e., multicultural; "melting pot"; segregational; or exclusionary)? and, How does CDS attempt to influence students' perceptions of themselves and others?

The IB PYP curriculum drives CDS to engage the multiple systemic levels outlined in Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1986) ecological environment in its approach to learning. Students' understandings of themselves are situated in an awareness of the past and present historical and cultural forces that shape their own and others' lived experiences. Thus they are taught to be conscious of the exo-, macro-, and chronosystemic forces that affect people's lives. Through use of this curriculum, students are also expected to understand how these systemic forces shape the production of knowledge with implications for fields of study such as science, social studies, and the arts. With this understanding, they are encouraged to apply a critical lens to the information they encounter from both personal and outside sources. In these various ways, CDS uses the IB PYP curriculum to influence students' perceptions of themselves, and to help them understand their relationships with others.

Some of the themes or concepts that are conveyed throughout the IB PYP curriculum are conflict, equity, power, causality, and interconnectedness. In order to comprehend these themes at even the most basic level, students must be equipped with knowledge of various mesosystemic, exosystemic and macrosystemic forces that influence the distribution of wealth, knowledge, and resources in addition to implications for peoples' lives. As explained in the social studies subject area, this knowledge is

essential for their participation in the classroom, their communities, and any society. Emphasis on an awareness of the effects of one's own actions or inactions also forces students to trace the effects of their individual actions outward. They are encouraged to reflect on how their individual actions can contribute to change within micro- and mesosystems, or social change, which takes place on exo- and macrosystemic levels. Likewise, the IB PYP curriculum encourages CDS to operate with an awareness of how individual outcomes are affected by external and systemic factors. In the personal, social, and physical education subject area, the curriculum notes how dialogue and partnership between the school and home are necessary for enhancing a student's wellbeing.

Additionally, the IB PYP curriculum contains elements reflective of Berry's (2009) multicultural acculturative environment, as well as Rudmin's (2009) secondary culture acquisition hypothesis. For example, the IB PYP curriculum aims to influence the culture of participating schools, the communities they affect, and the larger society by creating internationally-minded change agents. It promotes respect and appreciation for students' own and others' prior experiences and multicultural backgrounds. In an environment such as CDS that serves a high refugee and immigrant population, this approach facilitates the creation of a multicultural acculturative environment. According to Berry (2009), multicultural acculturative environments are characterized by the acceptance of ethnic and cultural diversity, and facilitate interactions between members of immigrant and dominant groups. In this environment, immigrant groups are encouraged to integrate aspects of their own cultures into their experiences within their resettlement community. Review of the IB PYP curriculum provides strong evidence that it aims to create the environment that Berry (2009) describes.

Next, Rudmin (2009) conceptualizes acculturation as a cultural learning process that results in the acquisition of a second culture for mainstream and immigrant populations. The IB PYP curriculum insists that the school consider itself a community of life-long learners. Although Rudmin (2009) does not use this exact terminology in his description of secondary culture acquisition, life-long learning is a central tenet of his theory. He argues that members of non-immigrant as well as immigrant groups undergo general cultural learning processes throughout their lives as a result of group interactions. Because students and faculty are taught to examine their own backgrounds, experiences, and points of view, and then encouraged to seek out those of others, students and teachers alike are involved in an ongoing learning process that informs the way they think and behave. This key feature of the IB PYP curriculum is essentially a real world model of Rudmin's (2009) secondary culture acquisition theory as well as a blueprint for how to translate it into practice.

Although specific findings pertaining to refugee students' self-esteem are not presented in this chapter, expectations can be made based on the values present within the IB PYP curriculum. The language subject area promotes learning in students' native languages for non-native speakers of English, and cites this process as important for students' personal development, self-esteem as a result of their ethnic and linguistic identity, and maintenance of their cultural identity. In addition, the identity strand of the PSPE subject area helps students value self-reflection, cultural influences, adversity and resilience, and helps them understand how feelings of self-worth and esteem affect learning and interactions with others. These and similar values and themes throughout the

IB PYP curriculum suggest that refugee students are likely to exhibit positive perceptions of themselves, their beliefs, and their cultural backgrounds.

However, based on students' individual experiences that may contain experiences of trauma, loss, and victimization, refugee students' forms of artistic expression are also expected to be cathartic. While the IB PYP curriculum encourages students to value their ethnic identities, cultural backgrounds, and experiences that have shaped them, the arts subject area also explicitly encourages students to express a broad range of feelings. Thus sad, angry, or negative emotions present in various forms of artistic expression are likely to represent students' feelings in a given moment about a particular situation, and not necessarily their overall feelings about themselves or their ethnic identities. Moreover, the IB PYP learner profile provides a description of the type of person the student is learning to become. Thus it would not be unreasonable to expect to see these traits represented in students' portrayals of themselves.

Discussion and Conclusion: IB PYP as an Experiential Blueprint

In conclusion, findings suggest that the IB PYP curriculum is a blueprint for shaping students' identities and worldviews. Through the use of this curriculum, they are encouraged to become internationally-minded, self-reflective agents of social change who operate with an understanding of how various systemic levels affect their own and others' lives and vice versa. The curriculum's international perspective necessitates the adoption of a multicultural approach to learning and teaching. CDS is required by state law to address the subject areas and general topics outlined in the SMC. Thus SMC strives to provide the basic educational tools (i.e., reading, writing, history, science, and arithmetic) to generally socialize students via public school curricula. However, this analysis

suggests that CDS relies most heavily on the IB PYP curriculum to direct and sustain the construction of cultural diversity and the transmission of knowledge at the school. While the IB PYP approach is likely to benefit all students who attend CDS, it is expected to be particularly beneficial for Sub-Saharan African refugee students. Given the discrimination and prejudice that ethnically and religiously different refugee groups are likely to encounter in the U.S. (McBrien, 2005), an approach that bolsters students' self-esteem while helping them become aware of the systemic forces that can influence their experience are crucial tools that will impact their success in this country.

CHAPTER IV:

Fostering Identity, Solidarity, and Agency Within the Cultural Diversity School

The Cultural Diversity School (CDS) is best described by the educators and administrators who have: been involved with the school for years; witnessed ways in which the school has undergone subtle and drastic change; and, been immersed in this environment on a daily basis. The perspectives of five such CDS personnel are explored in the following chapter and used to understand the school's ecological environment in terms of the present academic query. Their responses will help identify and illumine those elements, if any, of the CDS environment that are characteristic of one or more aspects of Berry's (2009) acculturation taxonomy environments (i.e., multicultural; "melting pot"; segregational; or exclusionary). Furthermore, their sentiments will help assess how CDS attempts to positively influence students' perceptions about themselves and others.

The Voices of CDS Personnel: Methodology

Informants were identified during the May 2010 participant observation and data collection process. During this period, the names of a few highly influential and involved CDS faculty and staff members were recorded. From this initial list, a purposive sampling technique was used to select highly influential CDS informants who would be most knowledgeable about the school's history, culture, and educational processes. All of the participants selected for interviews³ have worked at the school at least six years as of

³ All interviews were conducted between August 2011 and October 2011.

August 2011. Given that the school opened in 2002, these participants have the requisite employment longevity and experience to describe crucial elements of the CDS environment. During the interview process, names were added and removed from the list, as information about individuals' availability, knowledge, and school involvement became evident. One fourth grade teacher, one former fourth grade teacher, two program coordinators, the curriculum specialist, and the media specialist took part in interviews that lasted forty-five minutes to an hour. Logistics prevented interviews with the school principal and vice principal. However the current sample reflects personnel most intimately involved in shaping the CDS educational experience on a daily basis in general and with fourth graders in particular. Thumbnail profiles of the five interviewees are provided below.

Thumbnail Descriptions of CDS Personnel

- Kevin David⁴ is a 50-year-old African American male of Puerto Rican descent. He has been a fourth grade teacher at CDS for eight years, and has been the grade-level coordinator for seven years. His part-time employment at the metropolitan zoo and the presence of an international crab-itat sanctuary in his classroom, which contains twelve hermit crabs from five different parts of the world, have earned him the title “resident animal expert” on campus. In addition, Kevin uses his outside resources to schedule field trips to the local science center for the school. As the only African American male classroom teacher, he takes his unofficial positions as mentor and role model to his students very seriously.

⁴ Each informant has been given a pseudonym.

- Kim Mueller is a 35-year-old White female who grew up in New Jersey. She has worked at CDS as a librarian for seven years and has been the school's media specialist for three years. Although book checkouts, multimedia and technology education, and management of the computer lab are her official responsibilities, Kim is also an effective fund-raiser and gatherer of educational resources. At the time of the interview, she had arranged a book talk with a local children's author that subsequently became an opportunity for students to illustrate the writer's upcoming chapter book. As a board liaison, Kim is also in a position to acquire knowledge of the internal workings, politics, finances at the school, and other information that she relays to her colleagues. In addition, the media center is often used to host gatherings, meetings, and events involving students, parents, teachers, and guests, so her unofficial role as scheduler is vital to the smooth operation of various school affairs. Like many of the faculty and staff members at CDS, Kim unofficially mentors and emotionally supports a variety of students who cross her path.
- Léon Girard is a 38-year-old first generation American male of Haitian descent. Although he has been the After Class Institute (ACI) program director for seven years, and the director of special programs at CDS for two years, Léon has been working with youth development for over a decade. Through the ACI program, Léon coordinates tutoring and cultural exchange activities, when funding permits. His position provides access to parents. Thus he acts as a liaison between parents and teachers, relaying information and concerns. In addition, his position provides him with insight into students' academic and personal struggles. During and

outside the ACI program, Léon spends his time catching up with and mentoring students. Léon considers himself an activist. Like Kevin, Léon acknowledges and values the importance of his supportive and positive Black male presence on campus. He uses his influence to enrich students' understandings of their communities and their opportunities for personal advancement and social change.

- Shawna Hargrove is a 28-year-old African American female of West Indian descent. She has worked at CDS for six years in various capacities. Shawna has also held positions at CDS as an assistant teacher for the fifth grade, a fifth grade teacher, and fourth grade teacher before taking her current position as a school counselor for both the main and east campuses. In addition to her administrative roles, Shawna is also one of the after school dance teachers. Her various perspectives have equipped her with knowledge of how to effectively navigate different aspects of the CDS environment as well as build meaningful relationships with students and faculty members. Shawna's goals as an educator involve fostering a safe environment for students and advocating on behalf of their needs as well as constantly reminding them about their individual agency and responsibility to affect change in their communities.
- Susan King is a 60-year-old White female who has been the Inner School (IS) program coordinator for six years. As a retired public school teacher and head of the IS program, Susan pairs refugee students with volunteers who are retired principals and teachers. She then coordinates between students, volunteers, and classroom teachers to ensure that participants' needs are met. Susan also coordinates outings and activities for the students and volunteers to provide IS

participants with an opportunity to build lasting and supportive relationships. In Susan's own words, one of her aims is to "build a closeness across generations and across cultures" through this one-on-one program. She continues, "my goal is to get as much for these kids as I can. Not with money, but confidence—you know, anything that's going to build their confidence. Help them learn."

In addition to reflecting a multicultural team (i.e., one African American male, two White females, one Haitian male, and one African American female of West Indian descent), the above personnel profiles shape the subsequent themes and representative quotes that emerged about the goals and objectives of CDS. Member checks conducted via email in April 2012 included the below analysis of the informants' interview responses.

CDS Personnel as Instruments of Change: Salient Themes

Numerous themes emerged during the personnel interviews that inform us about CDS educators' influence on the acculturation processes of its refugee students. The three most salient and relevant thematic categories to this research inquiry are presented and described below. They are: multiculturalism and identity; globalism and social forces; and, agency, dissent, and social change. The first thematic category explores the way language, culture, and other processes are used to foster a sense of multiculturalism and identity within the CDS community. The second discusses the importance the school places on making students aware of their position within and relationship with the rest of the world. The final category examines the school's emphasis on individual agency and social change. In addition to representative quotes, each thematic category and the subthemes that comprise them are assessed below.

Multiculturalism and Identity at CDS: “Difference is the Norm”

CDS deeply values multiculturalism. This value is integrated into the school’s approaches to learning and interacting with others. Furthermore, this value is foundational for character and identity development processes that take place within and outside the classroom. Given the repeated emergence of these concepts during personnel interviews, both multiculturalism and fostering identity are explored as separate, but related subthemes in this first thematic category.

Multiculturalism

CDS faculty and staff members seem to have the most influence on the nature and scope of diversity that is intentionally characteristic of the school. Diversity, multiculturalism, and the acceptance of various cultural backgrounds and experiences are discussed on numerous occasions and by each interviewee. For example, Shawna Hargrove, the school counselor and former classroom teacher, makes the following observation:

People walk in here and they say they feel good. It’s an energy, a community feeling that we have here. The diversity. Embracing difference is definitely instrumental to who we are as a school. (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

Echoing Shawna’s statement, Kevin David presents a similar description of what visitors experience as they walk on to the CDS campus:

If you've ever been stared up and down for looking different in your life—and most people can understand that in some situation—that never happens at [CDS]. It never happens...I mean that's from the minute you walk in the door. I think as opposed to seeing it as a huge challenge—most educational facilities see an international population as a challenge—we embrace it as just the greatest thing that it could be...it’s been a part—I have not been here since the first day of school since this facility has been around, but ever since I've been here its always been, so it becomes a part of a school culture. That—it just doesn’t happen at [CDS]. (Kevin David, fourth grade classroom teacher)

Taken together, Shawna and Kevin's statements reveal a use of strong language to describe the role of inclusivity and diversity at CDS. Their reflections suggest that diversity is considered a self-defining characteristic of the school. As such, it is an invaluable asset. As Shawna reveals, embracing difference is instrumental in helping the CDS community establish its identity. Furthermore, Kevin recounts how diversity is considered an "instrumental" and arguably essential component of CDS culture. Inclusivity and an appreciation for difference have been incorporated into the culture since the school's inception such that judgment and criticism on the sole basis of difference appear to be nonexistent. In fact, as far as Kevin is concerned, "it never happens". Overall, the above statements represent the CDS imperative to create a space that fully embraces diversity and combats discrimination on the basis of difference. Léon Girard, the ACI program director, provides an example of how deeply this value is embedded in the school's culture:

It's nothing for, you know, a seven year old to be able to explain why his classmate wears a hijab or dresses a certain way when they're out of uniform. So I just think its built into the fiber of the culture here at this school. (Léon Girard, ACI program director)

Emphasis on embracing diversity has visible effects on students' ability to relate to others. Because an appreciation for ethnic and cultural diversity is viewed as an essential part of the school, this practice becomes second nature for CDS students. Léon also uses strong language in his assertion that even young CDS students are able to not only understand, but also explain many of the behaviors and experiences of classmates that are different from their own. His affirmation that "it's nothing" for a student to be able to understand and act on the school's multicultural values relates closely with Shawna and Kevin's descriptions of the ways that embracing diversity is naturalized at CDS.

As IS coordinator, Susan King delivers some insight into why embracing diversity is part of CDS culture:

Here the kids are—you know, they're just taught—it's just an accepted thing. That people do different things in different countries, boy isn't this interesting? It's not to be judged, it's just to be celebrated in its glory. (Susan King, IS coordinator)

Susan discusses how pedagogy is connected to an appreciation for diversity. Her use of “boy isn't this interesting” illustrates how educators strive to model approaches to inquiry that simultaneously explore and appreciate difference and diversity. Moreover, Kim Mueller, the librarian and media specialist, describes how this modeled approach to inquiry is reflected in student behavior:

Even when their classmates are bringing unusual food for lunch it's like, wow, what is that? They're curious about it...there's no stigma attached to new foods or new languages or clothes. (Kim Mueller, librarian and media specialist)

The teachers and the curriculum model desired behavior—and the students adopt it. She also offers an explanation for why and how diversity has become a part of the school's culture. Her words reiterate and summarize the sentiments she and her co-workers share:

When you have a naturally diverse population you can't help but—it just expressing itself in your classroom. Our staff is also multicultural—multiculturalism is not a buzzword here. It's what the school is about, and we don't have to plan it, it just happens all the time. It's happening all the time. (Kim Mueller, librarian and media specialist)

According to Kim's observations, the school's diverse environment is linked to the diversity within the broader CDS community. Student body, faculty, and staff heterogeneity and value placed on diversity are mutually reinforcing in an effort to meet the school's goals. This ongoing mutually reinforcing process is in part fueled by the intentional makeup of the student body, faculty, and staff. Although it seems like multiculturalism “just happens”, Kim and Susan's statements allude to consistent strategic efforts that contribute to the observed culture at CDS.

Though multiculturalism is instilled in CDS culture through the IB PYP curriculum to such an extent that it is easy for CDS faculty and staff members to forget to mention the intense intentionality behind it, there are ways in which an appreciation for diversity is regularly enforced. Shawna Hargrove, the school counselor, elaborates on these processes:

We foster that environment by embracing the differences, embracing the cultures, embracing different religions, things of that nature. Kids are learning how to accept others, and they realize that everyone here looks different. And it starts with this little community that we have. Some people wear hijab, some people celebrate Hanukah, not everybody celebrates Christmas, that kind of thing. And it's more accepting because it's more of the norm instead of being something that's different. In the general population, everyone is different. And difference is the norm. (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

Shawna's above statement articulates a connection between the people who comprise the CDS community, how students are taught to think about difference, and how the school presents its students with a model for interpreting diversity in the world beyond school walls. After all, as Shawna reminds, "in the general population, everyone is different". By integrating an appreciation for difference into CDS culture through the creation of an intentionally multicultural community and various teaching approaches, an appreciation for diversity is normalized. In fact, school educators, such as Shawna, consider their environment more "normal" than spaces that attempt to downplay or discourage difference. Kim Mueller, the media specialist, reflects on whether and how students adopt a similar perspective:

Kids are just very impressionable anyway...I think it would be an anomaly to walk into a classroom where there were all white students. It would be unusual for them. I think they would take notice of that. They don't notice the diversity in their classroom, but they would notice homogeneity. (Kim Mueller, librarian and media specialist)

Kim's statement aligns with Shawna's association of difference with normalcy. However, Kim extends Shawna's statement by asserting that homogeneity would actually be considered an anomaly based on the daily exposure to diversity CDS students experience.

Diversity is viewed as both a defining feature of and invaluable asset to CDS. Multiculturalism, or an appreciation for ethnic, cultural, and experiential differences, is introduced through the creation of an intentionally diverse community and modeled through various approaches to inquiry, programs, and events. Diversity and an appreciation for it are mutually reinforcing, such that embracing difference has become part of CDS culture. Thus "difference is the norm" within this community to the extent that homogeneity would arguably be atypical. Taken together, these features are characteristic of a multicultural environment described in Berry's (2009) theory. Furthermore, as Léon states, "its nothing" for members of the CDS community to grasp and apply this worldview to everyday interactions on campus. This particular aspect of the school's culture is evident, even to outsiders, when they visit the campus. The fact that refugee and immigrant student and staff members' presence has significantly shaped school culture is arguably an example of Rudmin's (2009) secondary culture acquisition at work. The value placed on multiculturalism is important for building relationships among students and between students, faculty, and staff members. These relationships have been found to be extremely important for refugee students' ability to successfully navigate their educational experiences upon resettlement (Hek, 2005; Kovacev & Shute, 2004; Smith, 2008). Although CDS cannot be considered a panacea, comments by front-line personnel suggest that they believe it provides a singular learning and socialization experience for students.

Fostering Identity: Varied Approaches to a Common Goal

Diverse traditions, practices, religions, beliefs, and backgrounds are respected, valued, and encouraged at CDS. Consequently, differing ideas about how to foster students' ethnic identity development in the midst of a multicultural environment emerge during personnel interviews. Most faculty and staff members express enthusiasm about making sure students understand and appreciate their own and others' diverse ethnic backgrounds. According to Shawna Hargrove:

I tell them all the time, don't lose who you are. Don't be ashamed of that. And I think we try to foster that here. Love who you are. It's different, it's great. I guess my hope is that they don't lose that, and I try to tell them, you don't want to lose that. (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

Her statement relates to a concern about external pressures on students to discard cultural or ethnic signifiers that differentiate them from peers in mainstream culture. She discusses her continued role in the ethnic identity development process (i.e., "I tell them all the time") and her hope that the rest of the CDS community supports her efforts (i.e., "I think we try to foster that here"). Although this appears to be the case, Léon Girard, the ACI program coordinator, suggests another way in which positive ethnic identity development is fostered at CDS:

[the students' neighborhoods are] kind of a tight knit community. So culturally, there are kids who were born here, but still speak with an accent...I'd say I haven't seen—I wouldn't want to speak on it and say, no, it never happens, but I'd definitely say I've never seen [someone] just far removed. I've never seen that. And I'm talking about kids who were born here and they're age seven or eight and still have an accent. It's just because at home...English is just your second or third language. I think there's some level of reinforcement here...there's been kids who I've seen have a full out conversation in Spanish, and then speak to you and you wouldn't even know that they could speak another language. You thought all they could speak was English. But yeah, I think home is the thing, 'cause I've run into kids who speak three or four languages. (Léon Girard, ACI program coordinator)

Although Shawna describes aspects of an environment outside of CDS that can pressure students to assimilate, Léon describes the community and immediate family as stronger

socializing agents than even CDS. He does not refer to the same threat for immigrant or refugee CDS students that Shawna does, especially while they interact with others in their community or at the school. To him, students are surrounded by opportunities at home and in their neighborhoods to retain elements of their culture of origin such as languages and accents. According to Léon's observations, CDS is a space where many refugee and immigrant students experience *continued* opportunities for cultural retention through interactions with classmates from similar backgrounds. According to Berry's (2009) definition of the term, Shawna's account reflects the presence of a melting pot social climate that encourages, or arguably pressures, refugee and immigrant groups to assimilate. However, Léon's observation identifies resettlement experiences characterized by separation. It is unclear whether this acculturative orientation emerges in response to receiving community attitudes, but it is evident that cultural retention is a choice that seems to be exercised regularly within the resettlement communities that these particular students inhabit.

Furthermore, both informants' accounts reveal that such experiences within and outside of the school play a large role in students' ethnic identity development processes. Shawna and Léon's statements do not reflect competing or contradictory views of the environment outside of CDS. Instead, they provide a more comprehensive description of students' experiences within and beyond school spaces. Thus Léon describes opportunities to retain elements of their culture and Shawna warns about obstacles to this same process. Léon also describes, when funding was available in the past, the ACI program that he directs has attempted to influence students' attitudes:

We've done a heritage, language, and culture program. And the idea there was to add to the level of understanding about the different cultures because you can only do so much in a school day. So to reinforce certain things, what we do is have teachers come and

work with the kids...And we'll have like these nice little parties and they could have like food from Bosnia or Kurdistan and, you know, it turned out to be an interesting thing, even to the point that like the kids were taking Burmese from one another...But that's something that we did in particular. Just exposure. (Léon Girard, ACI program director)

In this program, refugee and immigrant teachers as well as students would take ownership over cultural learning and exchange. In many ways, the ACI's heritage, language, and culture program enhanced the cultural exchange and cultural retention that takes place during the school day and, as Léon revealed, during interactions outside of school. Opportunities to share and teach aspects of one's own culture highlight the inherent value and appeal of shared cultural elements for oneself and for others. The cultural exchange that occurs during this and similar ongoing programs provides a real-world example of secondary culture acquisition as described by Rudmin (2009). The learning and intentional cultural exchange that occurs at CDS is not always prescribed by organizations (i.e., the International Baccalaureate Organization) outside of the school via curricula or program policies. At times, much of what takes place is in response to the diverse ethnic groups and cultures that comprise the student body, faculty, and staff. While this is sometimes done to meet the needs of the refugee and immigrant students, it also meets the school's needs to educate and prepare students for success once they leave CDS. In this way, school policies and programs are the result of a cultural shift that began with the presence of the refugee and immigrant community in the school.

Other faculty and staff members also rely on opportunities for students to exercise ownership over their own ethnic identity development and cultural exchange at CDS. How these opportunities arise, however, are highly dependent on the faculty member. For example, Kim Mueller, the librarian and media specialist, describes how such opportunities organically arise while teaching students in the media center:

I have a student who's from South America...it was just something that we were studying and she wanted to talk about the volcanoes in her home country and I encouraged her to do that. And we learned. We looked at maps, saw where she lived... You know, [student's name], oh she's from Colombia and maybe she can tell us something about it. So encouraging the students to explore their own cultures as well. (Kim Mueller, librarian and media specialist)

Like Léon, Kim views insights into students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds as valuable opportunities for reinforcement and exchange. Susan King voices why she prefers her approach during students' participation in the IS program:

You have to be careful what you ask. You know, encourage the children to talk about themselves, their family, their homeland, but you have to be very careful because we don't always know to what extent the kids may have been traumatized. So you have to be very careful and let them do much of the talking. And, you know, [the volunteers]'ll talk about, who's that you're drawing? If they put more than one person in the picture. And some kids have shared that's mom, dad, this is my little brother, on and on, and they'll talk about what their country is like. And we'll get them to show us on the map where they're from and talk as much about it as they want to without asking a question that could be disturbing for the child. (Susan King, IS program coordinator)

Susan's approach is marked by a sensitivity to the hardship that many refugees at CDS and elsewhere tend to have faced prior to resettlement. Researchers have discussed the fact that academic environments that foster mutual respect, trust, and caring can mitigate the emotionally and psychologically traumatic effects characteristic of many refugees' experiences (Davies, 2008; Hek, 2005). Thus Susan's reservations are well founded.

Whereas the ACI program relies on ownership of one's ethnic identity development to strengthen a sense of pride in students' heritage as well as share elements of one's culture with others, Susan's approach places greater emphasis on safeguarding that revisiting past experiences does not cause more harm than good. It also admits limited knowledge of whether previous cultural experiences are associated with traumatic memories. For Susan, it is safer to avoid making assumptions; instead, students largely determine the boundaries of their own ethnic identity exploration and cultural exchange. Kevin David, a fourth grade classroom teacher, similarly expresses his concerns on the matter. His

reservations highlight the complexity of refugee students' ethnic identity development with implications for school practices:

You have to respect what families wish. The reality is that so many kids don't really understand just who they are. It's a life process. In my earlier years a lot of our children, they were born in their native country. What I see now, in the last eight years based on the world situation, the children that I had last year, for example, were born in refugee camps, which means they weren't born in their native countries. They came as very young children to the U.S. Their parents are from their home country, they were born in, you know, let's say Egypt, for example, lived most of their life in the U.S. So what culture do you teach them? It's a tough question for many children. It's a huge question. I remember—this is years ago, but one of the kids, they were born in the Congo, they were refugees from the Congo. Their father was imprisoned in the Congo, and then he was later moved to a prison in Russia or something like that. So do you want these children to embrace the Congo? It's one of those kinds of things. So, during UN day we march for our various home countries. Back then we were very strict. You are from this country, you represent this country. And it was always a huge problem for those children because they were made to march for Congo, which is a country that did not embrace them, their family—and it was tough. But I think we got smarter, which is why now we say, you know, hey, you should march for wherever you want to march for.
(Kevin David, fourth grade classroom teacher)

Kevin's reflection reveals some of the changes that CDS has undergone as a result of student experiences, as well as his understanding that ethnic identity development is an iterative process. Through a combination of lived experiences, interactions with others, environmental pressures and information received from various sources, individuals make choices about aspects of culture(s) that they may or may not express throughout the course of their lives. However, the process can very quickly become more complex, particularly when assumptions are made about students' ethnic identities in relationship to their culture of origin. A school that truly values multiculturalism and differing expressions of culture arguably allows its students and their families to function as experts about their own experiences. Rather than confine students to an exploration and expression of ethnic identity based on outsiders' assumptions, CDS made changes to the school's UN Day policy to include varied expressions of ethnic identity. This action reflects movement toward alignment with the school's multicultural values. It also

reveals how CDS uses self-reflective and iterative processes to inform ethnic identity development efforts.

There is still some concern for how and whether students will choose to embrace their ethnicities once they leave CDS. This concern has implications for the nature and scope of CDS personnel in ethnic identity development. For example, Shawna Hargrove, the school counselor, elaborates on her unease:

Even the ones that were here before have kind of strayed away from where they're from. Almost as if once they left CDS it was bad to be different. I've seen them go into middle schools and not wear hijab anymore and, you know, change their clothes and change the way they talk and change their group of friends. Almost as if they're ashamed of it.
(Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

Shawna's observations support her intentional, active, and ongoing engagement in students' ethnic identity development. However, her experiences suggest that CDS training and exposure alone do not automatically translate into long-lasting positive perceptions of students' own ethnic, cultural, and religious identity markers. Therefore, she remains involved in what she considers a struggle between the dominant values within and those outside of CDS. Fostering students' lasting appreciations for their own ethnic identities is a complex and value-laden process determined, in part, by differences in perceived threats. Shawna perceives external pressures to assimilate as the most salient threat to students' well being, whereas Susan King, the IS program coordinator, and Kevin David, the fourth grade teacher, perceive outsiders' well-intentioned, but wrongful assumptions as the biggest threat to students' well being. Meanwhile, Léon Girard, the ACI program director, and Kim Mueller, the librarian, view opportunities for ethnic identity development in terms of student-initiated opportunities for cultural exchange. Furthermore, CDS, IB PYP curriculum, and educators' conceptualizations of multiculturalism illustrate how ways of expressing and retaining cultural identity may

conflict with those of students or their families. Thus almost eleven years since the school began, the practice of multiculturalism and its implications for ethnic identity development is still being understood and negotiated. Moreover, this is an ongoing and iterative process. These differing views among staff reflect the reality of the complexity found in an intentionally diverse space.

The above findings indicate that CDS is a multicultural acculturative environment as described by Berry (2009) in his acculturation taxonomy. Students' various and multiple ethnic identities are acknowledged and appreciated within the CDS community such that it facilitates positive self-identity and appreciation for heterogeneity. Further evidence of Berry's (2009) acculturative environment is illustrated by staff efforts to prevent assimilative attitudes or emphasis of one group's culture over others. Moreover, Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1986) ecology of human development environmental model can be used to explain the conflicting approaches to understanding and expressing multiculturalism that arise in the CDS environment. Using his terminology, mesosystemic forces, or the interaction of influences at home, school, and other social circles, provide CDS students with multiple approaches to consider and understand their developing ethnic and personal identities. Consequently, teachers often feel pressure to compete with values that are being taught in mainstream culture as well as at home, while others feel inclined to defer to parents' desires and students' own approaches to identity development. Finally, Rudmin's (2009) secondary culture acquisition hypothesis can be used to understand how an acceptance of and appreciation for diversity are incorporated into the CDS culture. Because students and teachers regard learning as an essential, ongoing process, learning about others' cultures takes place through daily interactions

and discussions. Refugee and immigrant students and teachers are invited to educate others, thus informing the secondary culture acquisition processes of non-refugee students and teachers.

Globalism and Social Forces at CDS: “We’re All In This Together”

This second theme explores the importance the school places on making students aware of their position within and their relationship to the rest of the world. Each informant referred to the concept of “international mindedness”. It is evident that knowledge of current and historical events in the U.S. and other parts of the world are integral to an understanding of the CDS community. Connectedly, an awareness of global affairs necessitates an awareness of the role various social forces and societal institutions play in shaping students’ own and others’ experiences. Thus CDS’ international mindedness and attention to social forces comprise the two subthemes explored in this thematic category.

International Mindedness as a Way of Life

Recognizing their relationship with the rest of the world is a pivotal part of school culture. Susan King, the IS program coordinator, elaborates on this assertion:

I think that’s part of the thrust of every day in this school—you are a citizen of the world. We’re all in this together.

As Susan describes, students, faculty, and staff are regularly encouraged to be mindful of their place in and ties to the global community. Her use of the word “citizen,” also found in the IB PYP curriculum, connotes a sense of belonging in any community. In addition, “we’re all in this together” is a reminder that, as members of the world, CDS members have both some claim to and responsibility for the communities to which they belong. Such a perspective may be especially important to help refugee and immigrant students

develop a sense of belonging within American and other societies that may be imbued with different forms of discrimination. Shawna Hargrove, the school counselor, elaborates on the definition and importance of international mindedness as it relates to CDS values in the following words:

Our goals and objectives kind of consist of allowing kids to feel safe in a learning environment and diverse community. Our mission is to allow our kids to be global learners and be concerned about their environments, the people around them, their surroundings, things of that nature...not just learning about what happens in the U.S., but how countries affect each other. So its more of thinking about others, other countries, how they might manage their conflict and how they might resolve things and how that affects us, and where we live or other people all across the globe...It's an awareness of how we are all connected and [how] we all affect each other. We all impact each other. (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

Her above statement reveals a focus on interconnectedness and a consequent sense of shared fate. Thus students are encouraged to understand how world decisions can influence them on a daily basis. Furthermore, the school's inception and continued existence, with its high refugee and immigrant population, is a testament to this reality. International mindedness and cultural sensitivity is all the more important because half student body attends CDS as a result of political, environmental, and/or religious turmoil that occurs or has occurred in another part of the world. Léon Girard, the ACI program director, echoes Shawna's statement about the relationship between the school's mission statement and its culture:

It teaches them that the rest of the world exists. They live in it and its important to have a relationship with the rest of the world...The reality is the world is smaller now. Get out there and experience it. Make a new friend. (Léon Girard, ACI director)

As Léon's statement highlights, the school's cosmopolitan community aims to prepare students for meaningful experiences and interactions with others in the rest of the world. Additionally, it encourages them to connect global citizenship with opportunities for

collaboration and friendship. He also provides insight into why he believes this belief is widely adopted by CDS educators:

There are a great many number of people here who have some level of understanding of why, the kids are in the position to have to become refugees in the first place. And what winds up happening is if you have a bunch of adults around that get it, the kids will begin to get it. So there's an understanding of what happened in Somalia, and why we have a number of students from there. There's an understanding of what happened in Bosnia and why we have a number of students from there and so on and so on. People's backgrounds, I guess. I'm a first generation American. Um, my family comes from Haiti. I was a Peace Corps volunteer, so I've lived overseas. So there's this, you know, there's an understanding. Everybody has something similar that makes them understand, I guess, the plight of being an émigré or a refugee. (Léon Girard, ACI director)

CDS faculty and staff members' experiences prior to teaching there have provided them with life experiences essential for developing a sense of global awareness that is central to the school's values. Furthermore, according to Léon, when faculty and staff members model global awareness and understanding, student attitudes and actions conform. His assertion reveals an important characteristic of CDS personnel—they appear to operate with an understanding of how structural forces, institutions, history, and current events affect students' placement and experiences at CDS. Personnel subsequently help students understand this reality as well.

In connection to Susan King's statement, "we're all in this together," Léon provides an example of how students' understandings of the concepts of empathy and shared fate manifest in daily interactions:

It's not uncommon to see high performing kids even helping the low performing kids... your buddy's helping you out with math or something—it's like one of those cute things you see. It's not, like, a problem. It's a cute thing to see, like, oh, man, you gotta erase that, try this, carry the one, that type of thing. Even sometimes its even more of like, conspiratory. We get to go outside if we finish, so come on. Let's work on this language arts together. (Léon Girard, ACI director)

Although this example may not appear to be directly correlated with international mindedness, it provides insight into how shared fate, which is connected to global

perspectives, plays out on a daily basis. The idea of shared fate (for example, “we get to go outside if we finish”) fosters collaboration and community rather than competition. As Léon describes, high-performing students assist their lower-performing peers to everyone’s benefit. Thus success is not considered a zero-sum game. Rather, it is an “all-or-nothing” situation where either everyone benefits or everyone is hindered. When applied to an examination of seemingly distant world affairs, this perspective enables students to understand their connectedness to international events and people.

In summary, CDS mirrors International Baccalaureate (IB) objectives in its aim to help students understand their positions in society, how their positions are influenced by others, and how their positions affect others. This perspective provides a foundation for assessing how their own outcomes are impacted by those of others. Furthermore, the IB PYP curriculum, which pervades and is reinforced by the school culture, provides faculty members and students with a sense of personal responsibility to help others inside and outside the school. However, this process does not automatically prepare students for the harsh realities of a society that does not generally operate from this same perspective.

Influential Systemic Forces Outside School Walls

The international mindedness inherent in the curriculum, interactions, and culture translates into increased awareness of current events that affect the students’ and others’ lives. Susan’s recount of a recent classroom experience highlights this observation:

[In] the fourth grade yesterday, there was discussion of the Troy Davis case. And, you know, I don’t know how that was handled, but it just came up, basically because, as I understand, because of the legal system and how it’s all...so, that’s intense for fourth grade. I don’t know if the teacher brought it up or if the kids did, but in fourth grade they will bring up such things...It’s not just the teachers. The IB sort of requires this of them. I don’t know, I feel like in any good school, current events is part of life... Children aren’t stupid. They’re looking at what’s going on in the world.

On September 21, 2011, Troy Davis, a 43-year old Black man, was executed for the murder of a police officer despite overwhelming evidence indicating his innocence. His death was and still is a controversial issue highlighting ways in which racism persists within the penal system in the U.S. The fourth grade teacher's willingness to facilitate a discussion of Troy Davis' murder during a lesson on the legal system reflects an understanding of multiple factors that mediate human experiences. As Susan notes, CDS educators are aware that kids are "looking at what's going on in the world." In order to help them understand controversies such as Davis' execution, a case can be made that the fourth grade teacher employs a theoretical model like Bronfenbrenner's (1977;1986) ecology of human development theory. Comprehension of the controversy surrounding the issue requires an understanding of what racism is, how it is institutionalized, and how it differentially affects people's lived experiences. Thus this discussion necessitates investigation into connections between chronosystems (i.e., history), macrosystems (i.e., legality), exosystems (i.e., the penal system), and individuals. Yet the fourth grade teacher is able to apply this theory in an applied, child-accessible manner.

Although grappling with social injustices seem to be stimulating challenges for CDS students, confronting harsh social realities are hard for those who have experienced resettlement firsthand, or who leave CDS for other schools. Four out of the five informants interviewed voiced their frustration about the potential impact of systemic forces on students' experiences before, during, and after their time at CDS. For example, Susan King's work in the IS program provides her with insight into the experiences of resettled refugee students. When asked about the most common problem that she faces in her position at CDS, she answered:

There's the problem that 'cause the kids are who they are and don't have means, you know, there's a problem of making sure that they have access to food, medical help if they need it, or whatever. And that's not necessarily our job, but, you know, we have counselors that try and make this happen. Try to make things accessible for the kids. I think my biggest problem is you can't fix it all. (Susan King, IS program coordinator)

Susan's statements reveal an awareness of the multiple systemic forces working against her own and others' efforts to help refugee students in particular succeed. Her concern and subsequent responses are not in her job description as an educator, but are willingly embraced on behalf of students. Shawna Hargrove, the school counselor, gives an account of her experiences with refugee and non-refugee students in the classroom that matches Susan's frustration:

It's so easy for someone to say, just go in there and teach them. Why aren't teachers doing this?... There's so many different factors, you know. I have kids that don't see their parents. I see kids more than they see their mom and dad at home because mom and dad are trying to take care of home, or maybe they're a single-parent family. When they get home, they don't see their mom or dad because mom or dad don't get home until ten or eleven o'clock at night. It's hard for them to do things like homework when mom doesn't really speak English. And when [the student] go[es] home [they] have to take care of three other siblings and nobody's there to help with homework. Why are they behind? I mean it's—there's factors, so many factors that play a part in that. (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

Susan and Shawna's statements point to external forces such as poverty that often affect students' abilities to pay attention and excel. Relevant literature discusses how parents' varying levels of education, demographic features such as ethnicity, and the cultural distance between the culture of origin and the culture(s) in the resettlement community can determine the ease or difficulty with which refugee families are able to transition (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004; Cabassa, 2003; McBrien, 2005). As Shawna also recognizes, there are linguistic barriers. Thus their observations describe some of the implications of flight circumstances for refugee children attending CDS. However, school support structures are in place to combat such negative effects. Léon elaborates on how his program operates in this capacity:

We have some very caring and also some very capable folks who really put forth a maximum effort. And we have a lot of support systems in place because, you know, you're going home and you might not get help at home. So in [ACI], for instance, a good number of kids—every ounce of homework they have, they're gonna do it here. Because if mom and dad can't read the stuff to help you, it's not going to happen, and even some parents might even be illiterate in their own language, because you've gotta remember these are people who are marginalized. Education's not a premium to somebody when they're being chased across the country or out of their country.

Given his understanding of refugee students' backgrounds and potential hardships, school programs like ACI provide support systems to actively combat the negative effects of structural forces (i.e., war, flight, poverty, and illiteracy) that have the potential to hinder academic achievement. Unfortunately, however, the school's ability to confront these negative conditions only extends so far. Many students are not prepared for the realities of discrimination outside of CDS. Léon describes how this happens on a daily basis:

I run into kids at the grocery store and like, the cashier's giving the mom a hard time because she doesn't particularly understand what she's being told or something. And I actually step in and say something. (Léon Girard, ACI program director)

Léon's narrative describes his reaction to unaccepting attitudes of community members of refugee families who do not speak English fluently. He contends that, non-native and non-fluent speakers of English are sometimes harassed for not assimilating linguistically.

Léon further elaborates on how this problem is more pervasive than a rude cashier:

There's a bigger picture that I always look at—how are you treated, just in general in society, and then how does that affect things like school and your job or, you know, how you're growing up... You still live here in the U.S. There's still the critical issue of race, gender, economic bigotry. All these things still affect you when you leave here... if you're from Africa, you know, you're still gonna—you might be a boy, you might get tall and bigger at age twelve and become an adversary as opposed to a kid. You understand? You threaten people. And these are the things that I have to deal with as just a black man... So you still have these things. If you're a young lady and you're from a particular culture, there's still an expectation of you that I think my own daughter, should I have one, wouldn't be faced with... she's gonna be able to pretty much just kinda do her thing. But some of these kids here, you wonder, what's gonna happen ten years from now? Is she gonna have to do this?... You know—will the boys get to go off to school and the young ladies won't, you know? I don't know. I worry about that type of stuff. (Léon Girard, ACI program director)

Léon is candid about the fact that discriminatory pressures are present in American culture. He voices his frustration about how to prepare CDS students for this rough terrain. On February 26, 2012, a young, unarmed Black male named Trayvon Martin was shot and killed days after his 17th birthday by 28-year old George Zimmerman who allegedly shot the youth at close range in self-defense. Martin's death, which occurred and received national attention four months after Léon's above statement, is one of many unfortunate incidents highlighting the relevance of Léon's concern for his own and other students. In addition to naming racism, sexism, and classism as issues in the U.S., Léon also realizes that students may contend with inequities from their culture of origin. Similarly, Shawna provides two examples of experiences in direct opposition to CDS values:

We do pacify them here. They're kind of given this perception of everything being—the world is not always like this. You can be different, you can wear your hijab, you don't have to have the latest new shoes on and people are [not] going to make fun of you. And you can speak another language or speak with an accent and that's not necessarily something that someone's going to make fun of you about...And when they go to the other schools—there was a student here, she was kind of like our poster child...she got into [a prestigious nearby private school] out there. They also kind of adopted the IB program, but the majority of the population—it's a Caucasian population out in that school—so it's a really really expensive, kind of ivy league kind of school...They were coming and recruiting from our school for students...When she got there, she literally went into this kind of depression, because she thought she was going to be in this environment where everyone was going to accept her accent and, you know, her family. And then she was kind of thrown into this environment where all these kids had all these expensive—their parents had all these big houses and, you know she was the only one that looked different in her class—maybe I'm—now I'm the minority...She's not there at that school anymore. She left after, I think two years because she just couldn't make friends. (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

This student's marginalized experience for being different resonates with Léon's concerns about young African boys being considered threats as well as students' mothers being subjected to harassment at the grocery store for failing to assimilate. This student's jarring experience upon graduating from CDS illustrates one of the indirect challenges

they may face upon exiting this safe haven into less welcoming spaces. In addition, Shawna's account draws attention to an important observation. Despite the fact that the other school had also adopted the IB curriculum, it is clear from this student's experience that implementation of the curriculum did not automatically translate into transformative practices or beliefs that influence attitudes, culture, and interactions at that institution.

Furthermore, Shawna also recounts how parents may pressure their children to avoid discrimination:

There's two assistants here that had kids here [at CDS] and one of them actually is at [same prestigious nearby private school] right now. She's there now, but she's also kinda taken away from being Bosnian. She blends in with them now. Now her hair is blond. And, you know, she's got this different group of friends. It is interesting. You see them kind of, just kind of blend in. And I even see parents push them into that to make life easier. (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

There are at least two intriguing aspects of Shawna's reflection. First, she provides concrete examples of how external changes, such as the student's hair color and friendship changes, symbolize inward assimilative attitudes (i.e., "she's taken away from being Bosnian"). Her assessment, "she blends in with them now," also suggests the student's deviation from a framework that positions difference as normal, desirable, and valued. Second, it is also interesting that the student described is a daughter of a CDS faculty or staff member. Although it is unclear whether these staff members are examples of parents who encourage their children to assimilate "to make life easier," it suggests the reality of a potential disconnect between school values and students' values once outside of CDS. It also implies that CDS parents may not reinforce or continue to support the daily practice of CDS values once their children are no longer there.

Evidently, the multicultural, internationally minded and social justice oriented environment of CDS can only extend so far outside the school. If students are susceptible

to assimilative pressures in the grocery store, at home, and at schools, what is the value of the frameworks and ideals taught at CDS? Shawna answers this difficult question:

Some of the students didn't want to go. We had [student's name]. He's an American kid, but his parents sent him here because he was getting bullied in the public school. And I mean, he's a Caucasian kid—white American kid, rich family. And when he came...he would have all these different friends...and his parents would always say how the rest of the neighborhood kids wouldn't want to play with him because he was so proud of his friends at CDS. He got into [prestigious private school], and he got into [another prestigious private school] and he would not go to school there. He did not want to go. So it's like—that's what you want to see...You know, I think that was kind of cool his parents let him go to [nearby public school] because, you know, he wanted to be in an environment where he felt like it was comfortable to be different and unique and individual. (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

While this example contrasts the experiences of a minority refugee female and a white American male, both students clearly prefer the culture and values practiced at CDS. The white male student refused to attend a school that, in his estimation, did not sufficiently appreciate diversity. Similarly, the refugee female student left the prestigious school in favor of an environment where her “difference” would not be a source of stress. In both scenarios, the students recognized that they had more agency in determining the environments to which they preferred to belong than they arguably would have had without experiences at CDS. The IB PYP curriculum as it is taught at CDS and its contributions to school culture present students with an alternative view of how society can and should function. Like the latter student, this space empowers them to make decisions about the kind of community to which they want to ultimately belong. This is a meaningful act of resistance that should not be overlooked, particularly given its ability to equip students with the perspectives, values, and desire to make CDS and IB PYP ideals a reality after they graduate.

The emphasis placed on international mindedness at CDS is informed by the IB PYP curriculum and provides students with a framework for understanding how their

individual experiences and their experiences in other settings are influenced by external forces in other parts of the world. I contend that this is a manifestation of Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1986) ecology of human development model. The interview findings also provide insight into the complexities associated with the acculturative environments outlined in Berry's (2009) acculturative taxonomy. CDS culture is arguably multicultural, though individual CDS students, staff members, and parents may deviate from how these values manifest in differing environments as a result of acculturative pressures. Yet students who leave the school seem to learn very quickly that the world outside of CDS is not characteristic of a multicultural acculturative environment that regularly encourages acculturation via integration. Instead, there are likely to be pressures to acculturate via assimilation, segregation, or marginalization as students receive competing messages about how to navigate various environments from U.S. culture as well as from home. However, the example of the white male student's refusal to attend a homogenous school leaves us with optimism as well as an example of how the CDS experience can be beneficial for students who are not racial or ethnic minorities. Rudmin's (2009) secondary culture acquisition hypothesis also provides language for understanding how social change can and does take place. The fact that CDS presents students with a functional model of inclusion, global mindedness, and success as a result of the cultural learning that takes place between refugee and non-refugee groups empowers students with the ability to choose the kind of society in which they would prefer to live and which they can help create.

Agency, Dissent, and Social Change

The final thematic category examines CDS' emphasis on individual agency and social change. It is comprised of two subthemes. The first highlights the importance of student involvement, empowerment and agency. The second elaborates on how students are encouraged to voice dissent and its implications for inciting change. Each theme illustrates the intentionality used to provide voice to students who are often emerging from a variety of challenges during which their voice and/or those of their parents have been curtailed or silenced.

Individual Agency and Social Change

CDS seeks to empower its students by helping them recognize their agency despite seemingly overpowering social forces. In order to accomplish this goal, the school must also consider itself a change agent. Léon Girard, the ACI program director, discusses the relationship between social change and the school's identity:

It's a viable attempt at doing something that could change the circumstances of the people. It's a viable attempt at making change, a true attempt at creating a diverse community—a community that represents inclusion. But, you know, it's not perfect. I don't think there's any such thing, but this is truly a viable attempt, if I'm being 100% honest. And that's something that makes me proud. I'm proud to work here. People care. (Léon Girard, ACI Program Director)

Léon believes that the school enables him to be an agent of social change. His statement illustrates the intentionality with which CDS operates to transform social and physical spaces as well as improve people's lives. Emphasis on international mindedness, fostered by the IB PYP curriculum and school culture, ensures that children are aware of events going on in their communities and globally. Similarly the curriculum, school culture, and educators encourage students to take action in the face of overwhelming international

catastrophes. Susan King, the IS program coordinator, provides one such example in the wake of the March 2011 earthquake in Japan:

Definitely for Japan, they—and for other things, the kids will come out with the teacher and, you know, when the cars come to pick up kids, they have like this container—pennies for whatever. And they enable people to make donations. That's been several times what they've done, things like that. (Susan King, IS program coordinator)

Susan's account illustrates on way in which students' actions align with the value that CDS places on operating as a social change agent. Thus intentional and ongoing community involvement is not considered separate from the educational process at CDS. Léon, the ACI program director, discusses how outreach is built into the objectives of the school in a way that sets CDS apart from other neighboring public schools. He describes the school's goals and objectives as follows:

To offer a quality, grassroots-based education, primarily to kids who have been victims of war. This school has done well to establish that. We go beyond that, of course, 'cause the local kids get it too. The community outreach aspect of it plays a big role, and the family outreach—the work that I do [in the ACI] falls heavily under that category. So for me, that's been the main thing. There's a level of communication with families that I don't think you see in the average public school. (Léon Girard, ACI Program Director)

An awareness of competing social forces, as well as a genuine concern for students' well-being, compels CDS faculty and staff members to ally with members of the broader CDS community. In this way, the school is able to provide students with a quality education that prepares them to succeed in and positively impact their environments. Much of the school's culture and many of its activities focus on social change. Shawna Hargrove, the school counselor, discusses how an understanding of and appreciation for conflict resolution is central to this process:

It's an integral part of our world today. Um, whenever I would cover the Civil War, or even the American Revolution with the kids, they they don't get it. I would have students be like, Ms. [Hargrove], I don't understand that. That's stupid. Why? Why is that? Okay, let's see why that is. Why is it that we can all sit in this classroom today and nobody has a problem with that? You know, why can you be friends with this person? It wasn't always that way. So we talk about those different conflicts, how they resolved those

things-how in the future, if this does happen? Is it still happening today? How can I change that, just within my classroom? How can I change that in my household? (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

Students learn how conflict has been managed in the past as well as how to recognize, address, and confront it. This equips them with the tools to affect change as individuals. Moreover, the inquiry-based approach to learning about conflict that Shawna describes challenges students to analyze and question the status quo rather than interpret history or their personal experiences as unmitigated facts. Instead, they are encouraged to recognize how varying aspects of society are socially constructed and, consequently, can be changed. Léon provides insight into why this is uniquely the case at CDS:

You have teachers here who have been activists, so you have the mentality that the world needs to be changed, you're going to need to be the person to do it. And you have the capacity to do it within you, you know. So it's not uncommon for the kids to organize. I could show you right now—they made the decision that they wanted to take an art class. [Pulls out the students' hand-written ballots, received from the kids during that day's ACI program]. So they got together, they got a list of who wanted to be in it. And this was for me to pick if they could or couldn't. (Léon Girard, ACI Program Director)

Students receive messages about the importance of action, agency, and activism from the IB PYP curriculum and CDS educators. Combined with an understanding of how current conditions can change, students experiment with opportunities to affect their own experiences, as is illustrated by their petition for an after school art class. Thus they take advantage of opportunities to exercise agency whenever there is an opportunity to assist others or effect positive change. Furthermore, these same skills can be applied in the midst of conflict.

Voicing Dissent: Speaking Up and Speaking Out

CDS students are empowered with mental models for asserting their agency in the midst of conflict. In doing so, they are encouraged to voice dissent. Léon provides a strong example of this kind of action:

I buy the snacks. They thought the snacks were horrible. They were tired of eating ‘em and they wanted me to have a better variety. And they picketed. Now, mind you, the interesting thing is these were fourth graders. They leave this campus and go to a whole new campus—at the time after school was two separate places, so I ran two separate programs and they had two separate types of snacks. And so these fourth graders—when I peeked my head outside to see what was going on, I said okay, well who are your representatives? I’m prepared to negotiate. So they come in and...I was like, it’s May, you know. School’s over in two weeks...and they’re like, well it’s not for us. This is actually for the kids who are still here...And this was encouraged, by my staff, you know. [The students] came up with the idea, the staff helped them make placards and stood by looking proud. And then even the kids—they said, we thought we were gonna get in trouble. I said, nah, not with me. You did what you were supposed to do. This is your right. This is your constitutional right. You can dissent, and you can dissent here as long as it’s respectful. So it’s not uncommon for something like that to happen. And I think that comes from what they’re being taught...you got the African American kids, white kids, refugee kids. Everybody was in on that. (Léon Girard, ACI Program Director)

Although the student protest pertained to their own and others’ snack preferences, their actions are meaningful because they are applying skills learned in the classroom to their everyday lives. For example, in this scenario, students questioned and challenged school norms that contributed to the differential provision of snacks. Reminders that such actions are not only appropriate, but that students have the right to express themselves in this way reinforce familiarity with this concept. The fact that fourth graders who were two weeks from graduating to the East Campus decided to protest with and on behalf of the students who would remain in the program illustrates a rejection of hierarchical and differential treatment. To them, grade level differences were an insufficient justification for receiving more or less desirable snacks. Thus Main Campus students evoked their rights to the same snacks given to their East Campus peers; they advocated for their right to be included in the same snack distribution system as the fifth and sixth grade students. Perhaps if fourth grade students are able to become comfortable organizing and advocating at an early age, they may be likely to do so during more serious situations in the future. As the program coordinator states, this is not an isolated incident. Shawna

reveals how her fourth grade class reacted to school-wide lay-offs that left them without their much-loved teaching assistant:

I remember being very proud of my students too because when all those layoffs happened...they lost—I lost my assistant...And the administration—I'm like, you know, you need to come in here and talk to them. And I was so proud of [the students] on the questions that they had, you know—why did you do it? Why? Are you mad at them? Is there a conflict? What's going on? How do we fix it? And that's what they were—they were thinking, can we fix it? Can parents pay for the teachers to come—I mean it was all kinds of things that the kids had—and I was so—it was such a proud teacher moment for me...they're hitting these adults with questions and [the administrators]'re kind of sitting back stunned like wow. (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

Students attempt to apply knowledge gained about conflict and resolution when they challenge the administration's decision about layoffs. However, their confrontation was framed in terms of inquiry and the desire to understand the larger scope of the problem before proposing solutions. If constantly practiced and reapplied in different settings, familiarity with this worldview and knowledge of this approach to proactively managing conflict can be powerful when combatting discrimination on the basis of factors such as race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status.

Berry's (2009) acculturative taxonomy can be employed to examine how multiculturalism is intrinsically linked to agency in the CDS environment. When refugee and immigrant students are genuinely encouraged to acculturate into a resettlement community via integration, they are arguably considered valued members with rights that are no different from others in the community. If all views, beliefs, backgrounds, and cultures are welcome and appreciated, exclusionary or discriminatory practices on the basis of such factors are considered a threat. To maintain their own and others' positions within their community, multiculturalists must confront social constructions that undermine their worldview. In a similar manner, the integration of foreign-born groups

into resettlement spaces requires resettlement groups to undergo secondary culture acquisition processes (Rudmin, 2009). Lastly, Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1986) ecological environment model is a valuable tool for understanding how students at CDS conceptualize the relationship between themselves, their actions, and the world. The snack protest example illustrates how Léon's ACI program students were able to challenge his snack distribution system with an understanding of its implications for the experiences of their peers. Their intervention is informed by Bronfenbrenner (1977) because it reflects an awareness and rejection of how resources are differentially allocated in this circumstance. According to his theory, practices associated with the allocation of resources exist within exosystems. In opposing the snack distribution system, students challenged the way this exosystemic force manifested in this aspect of the ACI program.

Discussion: Research Questions Revisited

Results from interviews with school personnel suggest that CDS exhibits a multicultural acculturative environment as described by Berry (2009). Students' ethnic identities are embraced, respected, and encouraged to the extent that refugee teachers and students are appropriately experts on their ethnic origins and identity development. Each individual member of the community is also viewed as an expert on his or her own experience, and is encouraged to share his/her expertise with others within and outside the school. These are examples of ways in which refugee students are encouraged to acculturate via integration. As these findings reveal, however, this multicultural and integrative environment is not utopian. In a culturally relativistic community, conflicting perspectives are expected. Different faculty and staff members appear to express differing

approaches to interpreting and encouraging certain aspects of multiculturalism—and for various reasons. However, differing views are expected in a multicultural community, and inform us about nuances in implementing multiculturalism in the “real world”. Yet students generally receive clear messages about themselves, others, and the CDS mission. Multiculturalism in general advocates for an appreciation of students’ own and others’ cultural backgrounds and ethnic origins. The concept of international mindedness stresses student awareness of their societal positions and the advantages and disadvantages that come along with them as a result of historical and current events. This awareness also comes with the responsibility to take action on their own and others’ behalf because of the strong sense of shared fate CDS instills in its students. Thus students are being strategically and intentionally taught to become socially conscious agents of change inside and outside of their classrooms. While some of the examples of students’ post-CDS experiences appear troubling, other accounts of resistance are powerful indicators of the slow, but definite progress that CDS is making in its goal to create effective IB learners who are good citizens as well as exemplify social change.

These findings also illustrate the intentionality with which CDS faculty attempt to convey the uniqueness, inclusivity, and community they believe exist at their school. The language, symbolism, and ways that they convey the school vision and mission as well as describe its programs and activities suggest an intense desire to present CDS as a singular alternative to other local educational options as well as a place that is dynamic in its response to children in general and marginalized children in particular. Moreover, although they pride themselves at being proactively responsive to student needs, interviewees also describe an environment that has routinized certain processes they

believe promote social justice, community action, and safe spaces for children. Some outsiders might call into question some of their seemingly romanticized views about CDS. However, some of the candid remarks summarized above suggest that staff realize that CDS is not a utopia, but rather an institution striving to meet a unique need in a demographically and cultural diverse city.

CHAPTER V:

Bringing It All Together

This concluding chapter brings to bear the multiple data sources and theoretical lenses used to examine the curricula, physical and programmatic spaces, and views of personnel at CDS as well as their implications for students' academic experiences—particularly refugee youth. It includes analytical interpretations, major findings based on each methodological approach used, as well as theoretical and practical implications of these findings. Finally, I conclude with reflections on the strengths and limitations of this study, and insight into future directions of research on this understudied population.

The Multi-faceted Nature of A Multicultural School: CDS

Various elements of the CDS environment are characteristic of a multicultural acculturative environment as described in Berry's (2009) acculturation model. Multicultural environments accept ethnic as well as cultural diversity and promote integration and cultural exchange. CDS is characterized by efforts to holistically educate its students. Education, according to the school's model, involves the application of a framework that encourages students to explore their own experiences, and helps them understand how their lives shape and have been shaped by the perspectives and actions of others. This self-reflective educational approach also encourages them to operate with intentionality in their decision-making and actions. Furthermore, it aims to prepare students for conflict and provide them with ways to manage it. Taken together, this multicultural perspective provides students with a framework for recognizing and valuing

difference. In doing it, it forms a basis for how CDS students, faculty, and staff appreciate and understand diversity.

CDS culture not only endeavors to teach students that difference is normative and natural, but also that the interpretation of differences is socially constructed. Through the IB PYP curriculum, three of six trans-disciplinary themes in particular—*Where We Are In Place In Time*; *How The World Works*; and, *How We Organize Ourselves*—are utilized to convey these ideas. The curriculum encourages students to draw from personal experiences to understand this concept. Students learn through past and personal experiences outside of the school that all people do not perceive or react to their context-specific diversity in the same way. In differing environments, aspects of their dress, speech, or behavior, for example, are perceived positively, neutrally, or negatively by others. Consequently, they experience acceptance, tolerance, or persecution. Thus the curriculum and pedagogy at CDS equip students with a worldview that informs and reminds them of how perceptions about difference are shaped by historical events and power relations. Thus students are expected and taught to situate their personal experiences within historical and societal contexts.

By incorporating this heavily multicultural perspective into school practices, values, and culture, CDS also offers students an alternative view of how difference can be perceived and experienced. It provides them with an acculturative experience that contrasts with those that they're likely to encounter in many other spaces. In doing so, CDS also provides students with opportunities to learn how to navigate their way through non-multicultural acculturative spaces. Programmatic features of the CDS environment, such as annual events (i.e., UN Day, an internationally-themed Field Day, science fairs,

and vocabulary bees in students' non-native languages) and recurrent events (i.e., vocabulary bees in non-native languages, choir concerts, and ethnic potlucks) play a large role in translating the school's multicultural values into lived practice. Furthermore, fundamental school programs, such as the Inner School (IS), After Class Institute (ACI), and Weekend School (WS), reiterate these values as well. In addition, the intentionality behind the composition of the half-refugee and immigrant student body, faculty, and staff requires members of the CDS community, as well as guests, to encounter difference. In order to succeed within the CDS community, one must espouse multicultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices.

The adoption of a multicultural worldview constitutes a large part of how CDS aims to influence students' perceptions about themselves and others. The school maintains that worldviews, experiences, beliefs, values, opinions, and practices that are different from one's own should be respected as long as they do not aim to endanger others. Furthermore, differing approaches to viewing and experiencing the world should be explored and appreciated for the ways in which they can influence others' perspectives and experiences. Multiculturalism, as it is practiced at CDS, does not require that everyone always agree; instead, emphasis is placed on promoting and attaining mutual respect, and celebrating different opinions and values. It also encourages students to recognize and assert the value of their own beliefs, perspectives, and experiences.

The IB PYP curriculum encourages students to use their own experiences as a starting point for learning new ways to interpret the world through broad subject areas such as language, mathematics, science, art, social studies, and personal, social, and physical education. The educational approach outlined in the IB PYP curriculum does not

discount personal experience, regardless of the learner's age. All four student support programs—WS, IS, ACI, and the Early Assistance Reading Improvement (ERI)—take students' experiential starting points into account as they aim to educate. The first three efforts in particular have specific features that encourage students to explore, take pride in, and teach others about their experiences, perspectives, and ethnic backgrounds. In doing so, students are encouraged to realize that they have equally valuable, but differentially manifested perspectives, experiences, beliefs, traditions, and practices as other persons. Through this approach, CDS aims to demonstrate that it does not condone cultural dominance or subordination, or the feelings of superiority or inferiority that may be attached to subscribing to certain values over others.

According to the literature, many refugee students are likely to encounter problems in school, particularly as a result of limited English proficiency or interrupted schooling, with implications for their academic performance. More specifically, refugee students' expected underperformance in comparison to their non-refugee peers is often discussed in terms of difficulty navigating norms that govern schooling in their resettlement society (Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services [BRYCS], 2009; Dooley, 2009; Naidoo, 2009; Oikonomidou, 2009). Thus CDS culture and curriculum have particular import for the academic adjustment and acculturative experiences of refugee students. Upon resettlement, refugee students, as members of minority groups, are likely to encounter barriers to social acceptance and advancement as a result of: their ethnicity and race; potential religious differences; limited English proficiency; and, typically lower socioeconomic status. In addition, numerous other pre-immigration circumstances have the potential to affect the life chances of refugee students. CDS is an

environment where discrimination on the basis of ethnic and cultural differences is recognized and denounced. Furthermore, it presents refugee students with a framework for identifying and challenging discriminatory attitudes and practices that they are likely to encounter beyond school walls. Rather than acquiesce to the possible ways they as members of a marginalized group may be subordinated in mainstream culture, students are given the combative tools to develop positive self-identity and sense of value equal to others. They are taught that their perspectives and ideas not only have merit, but also the power to change their own and others' circumstances. Moreover, students are equipped with the tools to understand their positive or negative experiences in light of prevailing social and historical circumstances. This is important for enabling students to recognize and assert their agency when possible and/or to speak out against practices and perspectives that unjustly restrict their choices.

The value placed on multiculturalism at CDS encourages refugee students to take ownership over the ways they frame and understand their own experiences. For example, prevailing narratives that aim to describe the experiences of African people are dominated by descriptions of destitution, deficiency, and underdevelopment (Moyo, 2009). In contrast, Sub-Saharan African refugee students at CDS are challenged to acknowledge the hardships that they have experienced as well as their potential to succeed both because of and in spite of them. However, such experiences take place in a safe space. This framework, as well as those presented in the IB curriculum, supplies students with the tools necessary to navigate and succeed in the U.S. Furthermore, this perspective encourages students to strive to improve their societies by fighting injustice and promoting respect as they succeed within them. An analysis of findings from each

methodological approach provides deeper insight into these broad findings, as well as how various elements of the CDS environment support and mutually reinforce one another to create this empowering space.

How Place, Programs, Pedagogy, and Personnel Undergird CDS

CDS infuses its values into the physical and programmatic structures of the school. For example, both campuses are housed within church buildings. However, Protestant Christian religious beliefs do not structure or dominate the religious perspectives taught at the school. This is a physical example of how the school actively rejects potential external pressures to ascribe to, value, and practice certain beliefs and perspectives over others. In addition, the fact that the ERI, ACI, WS, and IS student and community support programs have been built into the school's programmatic structure illustrates ways in which CDS has adapted itself as a school to ensure that its educational approaches align with its core values. School values are constantly in action at CDS. The intentionally diverse student body, faculty, and staff are also evidence of this. Furthermore, the pervasiveness of CDS values are observed in the way that they are incorporated into pedagogy and school events. Thus these values are reflected in and reinforced by the poetry, drawings, and writings produced by students and encouraged by faculty and staff.

In addition to intentionally created physical spaces, the IB PYP curriculum explicitly reveals its perspective on the importance of this particular type of education, as well as its belief in the transformative nature of education. As a blueprint for the translation of CDS values into practice, it relates its perspective of education to inclusion and participation in American society and the world. Thus the IB PYP curriculum is

arguably a driving force for the values and perspectives in operation at CDS. A key element of the IB PYP curriculum is its emphasis on situating students and others' experiences in societal contexts. In this way, students are constantly reminded that their experiences and opportunities are interconnected with those of other people. Therefore, an understanding of the implications of action or inaction is necessary for equipping students with the skills to make informed decisions. Connectedly, the IB PYP curriculum emphasizes individual and group agency. Thus it provides guidelines for how to incorporate what is learned in the classroom into students' worldviews and actions.

Lastly, interviews with school personnel demonstrate how CDS educators' alignment with school values influences culture. Though they have varying perspectives on how to promote multiculturalism and encourage positive ethnic identity development in varying ways (i.e., in light of perceived threats to students' well-being), the desire to respect differing perspectives and experiences is the same. Students are encouraged to recognize themselves as experts on their own experiences and consequently embrace and share their expertise with others. Thus school personnel also play a role in encouraging students' sense of agency and self-efficacy in this and other ways. Moreover, the frameworks employed at CDS teach students how to recognize discriminatory spaces rather than internalize that discrimination they are likely to face. In this way, interviews with personnel also provide insight into the individual transformation that can and does place among students at CDS.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development theory is particularly useful for situating the school's impact on individuals and spaces, and for understanding the

potential power of the CDS approach. His theory explains how individual experiences are shaped by various elements of the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems that they inhabit. It also considers how personal and social histories (i.e., chronosystemic factors) influence an individual's experiences, perspectives, and opportunities. The IB PYP framework uses an educational approach that appears to incorporate an understanding of Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1986) ecology of human development theory into it. Students are taught to attend to personal histories, cultural histories, and societal norms and practices when reflecting on their own past or daily experiences. They are also encouraged to employ this framework when thinking about how they can impact their current experiences with implications for the future. Given the understood influence that microsystems can have on individual outcomes, CDS intentionally provides students with a framework for understanding and navigating the challenges they are likely to face in the world. In this way, I contend that CDS equips students with the tools needed to navigate American society. The school itself as a vehicle for social change can also be explored in terms of Bronfenbrenner's (1977;1986) theory. Operating with an understanding that microsystems, such as schools and homes, influence individual outcomes, CDS actively remains in touch with its surrounding community. This is accomplished through connections to parents via the TSPO, school programs such as the ACI, IS, and WS, and involvement in students' extracurricular activities. Thus there are ongoing efforts to belong to and remain in partnership with microsystems in the community to which CDS students belong.

Berry's (2009) acculturative taxonomy theory provides insight into the attitudes that influence the experiences of refugee students' within and outside of the school. The

findings of this study allude to each of the acculturative spaces discussed in his typology. CDS, for example, is a multicultural space. School personnel provided insight into the assimilative pressures that students faced by virtue of the school being embedded within a “melting pot” acculturative society. They also provided a glimpse into spaces where elements of students’ home culture, such as language and food, are emphasized over similar aspects of mainstream American culture. Such environments, according to Berry’s (2009) taxonomy, are arguably segregational. Examples of exclusive acculturative environments are also revealed by school personnel. For example, at least two CDS students were ostracized in exclusive acculturative school environments and were consequently forced to adjust via marginalization. Berry’s (2009) theory, however, is best utilized in conjunction with Bronfenbrenner’s (1977; 1986) ecology of human development. This combination of approaches allows for the recognition of different acculturative environments that simultaneously operate in interacting microsystems (i.e., within and individual’s mesosystem) with implications for an individual’s experiences in different spaces. For example, Berry’s (2009) typology is useful for identifying potential areas of discord between American society’s advocacy of assimilation into a “melting pot” society, and social change approaches that espouse integration and multiculturalism. However, it is lacking in key areas. Namely, it ignores the changes that take place in attitudes or behaviors as a result of interactions between groups of people. In this way, it blatantly ignores how individuals impact their settings. Yet, Rudmin’s (2009) secondary culture acquisition hypothesis recognizes the presence of human agency and adaptability that are inherent in the acculturation process. Thus elements of agency and social change are restored to Berry’s (2009) model. Rudmin’s (2009) secondary culture acquisition

hypothesis provides the critical feature to explain CDS' potential to challenge normative prescriptions surrounding education, and its efforts to empower students to similarly challenge oppressive societal values and structures is powerful.

The findings of this study are particularly valuable for at least two reasons. First, these results are potentially applicable to other environments. CDS provides an example of how state mandated curricula can be incorporated into curriculum like the IB PYP that aim to contribute to other meaningful aspects of students' educations. Thus the CDS approach provides an alternative to either-or conceptualizations that pit performance on standardized tests against efforts to holistically educate students. In doing so, it calls into question which groups benefit from curricula such as the SMC, how they benefit, and at whose expense. However, findings also suggest that this integration must be done carefully, intentionally, and actively. Implementation of the IB curriculum does not mean that the values in the curriculum will automatically permeate the culture of school in the same way that this occurs at CDS. Instead, the success of this approach depends on the integration of a curriculum, culture, pedagogy, programs, and people dedicated to the respect of multicultural perspectives. The account of the refugee female's negative experience at a prestigious school that also employed the IB curriculum exemplifies this fact. Given the dialogue on school improvement and the implementation of reforms within education policy (Cuban, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Manwaring, 2010; Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011), CDS' approach provides a strong example of how successful implementation of this educational approach can be achieved in one and arguably in other settings.

Connectedly, the benefits of such an environment potentially extend to students who belong to other minority groups—broadly defined. Moreover, CDS' educational approach is likely to be extremely beneficial for minority students who, like Sub-Saharan African refugee students, are plagued with conceptualizations of their experiences and opportunities in terms of a deficit model. The values and worldview taught at the school can empower students to identify problems that exist within our society and challenge them.

Strengths, Limitations & Future Directions

This study benefited from the use of multiple methodological approaches to examine aspects of a complex ecological space. Some of the practical implications of these findings could be bolstered, however with insight into students' academic performance as measured by their report card grades, academic attendance, and student writing projects. Furthermore, interviews with parents, as well as current and former students could illumine either harmony or discord between school aims and actual short and long-term accomplishments in students' lives. This exploratory analysis represents the first step in providing an assessment of structured attempts to cultivate comprehensive, culturally sensitive learning spaces for children in general, and for refugee children in particular. Subsequent study of this project will examine specific experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugee children at CDS. Interviews with graduates, their families, and parents of students who are currently attending the school will be useful for examining how other influential microsystems work with or against the learning processes in place at CDS. Furthermore, an in-depth exploration of the diverse

community that is affected by and affects the school could illumine the importance of key features influencing the CDS environment and student experiences.

APPENDIX

Table 1

Demographic Information for Schooltown Residents

| | Schooltown | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | 2000^a | 2010^b |
| Population | 2,609 | 2,960 |
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Female | 55.2% | 54.3% |
| Male | 44.8% | 45.7% |
| <i>Age</i> | | |
| Median age (years) | 42.9 | 45 |
| % < 18 years old | 17.0% | 20.1% |
| <i>Race</i> | | |
| Black or African American | 8.6% | 14.5% |
| White | 88.8% | 80.1% |
| Asian | 1.0% | 1.9% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 1.5% | 2.2% |
| Other | 0.1% | 1.3% |
| <i>Ethnicity</i> | | |
| % Foreign born | 3.3% | 3.0% |
| From Africa | 0% | 0% |
| From Asia | 48.2% | 19.1% |
| From Europe | 25.9% | 53.9% |
| From Latin America | 25.9% | 27.0% |
| % Speak a language other than English at home | 5.9% | 5.1% |
| <i>Socioeconomic Status</i> | | |
| Median household income | \$70,625 | \$78,750 |
| Median family income | \$92,341 | \$88,798 |
| Poverty Status ^c | | |
| Families | 1.6% | 7.8% |
| Single female-headed households | 14.7% | 27.5% |
| Individuals > 18 years | 2.8% | 8.1% |
| Related children (< 18 years) | 2.5% | 17.6% |
| Educational Attainment | | |
| < High school | 1.1% | 0.6% |
| High school diploma (or equivalent) | 10.8% | 11.1% |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Some college, no degree | 16.1% | 15.3% |
| Associate's degree | 3.7% | 12.1% |
| Bachelor's degree | 33.8% | 30.1% |
| Graduate or professional degree | 33.2% | 27.5% |

^aSource: United States Bureau of the Census, Census 2000. ^bSource: United States Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey. ^cPercentage of families whose income in the past 12 months is below the poverty level.

Table 2

Demographic Information for Haventown Residents

| | Haventown | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | 2000^a | 2010^b |
| Population | 7,231 | 7,554 |
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Female | 49.1% | 50.7% |
| Male | 50.9% | 49.3% |
| <i>Age</i> | | |
| Median age (years) | 28.1 | 29.5 |
| % < 18 years old | 30.0% | 28.8% |
| <i>Race</i> | | |
| Black or African American | 55.7% | 58.4% |
| White | 19.4% | 13.6% |
| Asian | 12.6% | 21.6% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 4.6% | 2.8% |
| Other | 7.7% | 3.6% |
| <i>Ethnicity</i> | | |
| % Foreign born | 33.7% | 39.5% |
| From Africa | 28.4% | 67.3% |
| From Asia | 32.6% | 22.0% |
| From Europe | 25.9% | 0.6% |
| From Latin America | 12.3% | 10.1% |
| % Speak a language other than English at home | 41.0% | 39.6% |
| <i>Socioeconomic Status</i> | | |
| Median household income | \$37,436 | \$31,741 |
| Median family income | \$38,056 | \$31,747 |
| Poverty Status ^a | | |
| Families | 19.5% | 21.3% |
| Single female-headed households | 36.4% | 18.6% |
| Individuals > 18 years | 18.4% | 20.1% |
| Related children (< 18 years) | 21.0% | 38.8% |
| Educational Attainment | | |
| < High school | 7.1% | 13.2% |
| High school diploma (or equivalent) | 25.3% | 29.5% |
| Some college, no degree | 24.8% | 24.8% |
| Associate's degree | 7.4% | 6.9% |
| Bachelor's degree | 16.2% | 15.2% |
| Graduate or professional degree | 5.4% | 5.0% |

^aSource: United States Bureau of the Census, Census 2000. ^bSource. United States Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey. ^cPercentage of families whose income in the past 12 months is below the poverty level.

Site Visits: Main and East Campuses

Days: May 18, 2010 to May 28, 201

Observation Rubric (for each campus):

- Lot size
- # of parking spaces
- # of buildings
- Description of facility
- Description of landscaping
- Playground?
- Main entrance location and description
- Administrative office location
- Campus layout sketch
- # of classrooms
- # of windows and exterior doors
- Description of walls, floors and lighting
- Description of décor, posters, etc
- Student-Teacher ratio
- # of Staff
- # of desks and chairs
- Physical size of classrooms and administrative offices
- Languages spoken
- Dress code?
- Description of dining hall
- Description of Before/After School Programs
- School Day Schedule
- Staff Schedules
- School Policies
- Curriculum and written instructional/learning materials
- Computer center and library description

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